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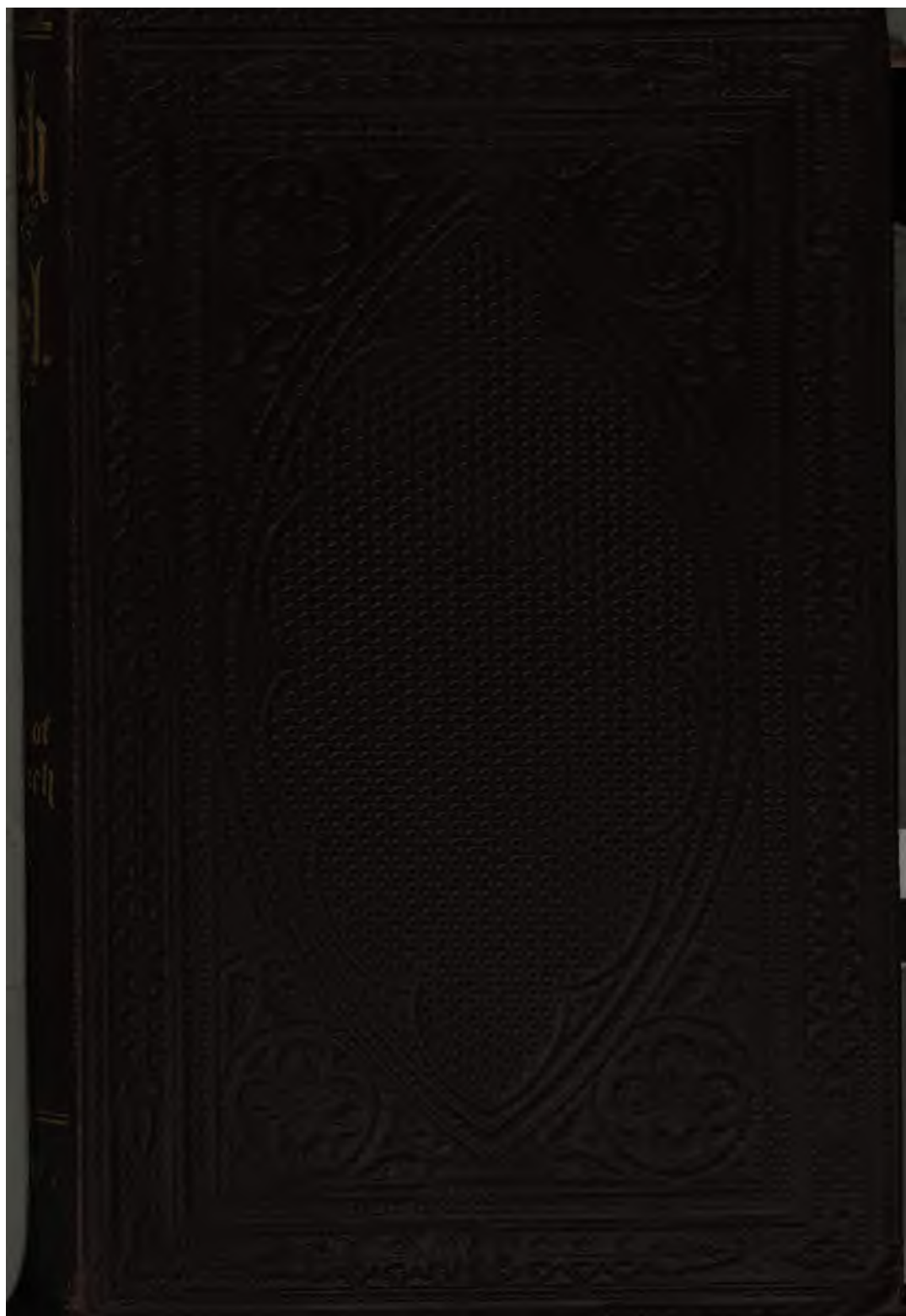
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**CHURCH AND CHAPEL.**

**VOL. III.**



# CHURCH AND CHAPEL.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“HIGH CHURCH,” “NO CHURCH,”

AND

“OWEN—A WAIF.”

“Those who do not live by His life, do not belong to Him, by whatever name they may call themselves, and whatever confession of faith they may sign. Belonging to a Church or sect is nothing.”—*Dying words of Bunson.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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BOOK V.

THE LOW ESTATE.

VOL. III.

B



# CHURCH AND CHAPEL.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A CHANGE.

TO DRAG our readers from the fresh air and hilly country of bright old Chipnam to the uncongenial and murky atmosphere of Lang's Place, Drury Lane, may not be considered the height of discretion. But the progress of our story wills it so ; and in Drury Lane, or amongst the courts and alleys round about, it is a matter of necessity to stay awhile. The reader will not dart off at a tangent when he knows there is no understanding the remainder of our tale, unless he bears us company to this shadow-land.

Lang's Place, Drury Lane—or rather that place which stands in this story by that name—was famous in history. Not in the history of England, but of that greater history of London which newspapers continue day after day, week after week, to write about. History of darkness somewhat, of temptation, violence, and robbery, flecked here and there by a little touch of better nature, a rescue from moral wrong or physical danger, as the case might be. In the history of London, so carefully written by the ever-busy reporters, Lang's Place was constantly appearing—could not by any process of burking be kept out of the papers. Robbery with violence in Lang's Place, in the bright noon-day, at the corner of the street where the old gentleman with the gold watch was gazing vacantly across the road, and had no suspicion of his fellow-men ; street riot in Lang's Place, where the aborigines and the wild Irish turned out *en masse*, and went at it with pokers and fire-shovels, teeth, nails, double fists, and bits of area-railings ; fall of a house in Lang's Place, and grand procession of the houseless on shutters to West-

minster Hospital; fire in Lang's Place, two women burned to death, and a third rescued by the indefatigable man with the fire-escape, who gets neither thanks, medals, nor rewards; accident in Lang's Place—a child of seven left in charge of her brother and sister, aged respectively five and three, whilst the mother went charing, and a box of lucifers eaten to wile away the time; arrest of an escaped convict in Lang's Place; murder in Lang's Place, the blinds down at number four, a ghastly figure in the back-room, where the door is locked, half the neighbourhood staring up at the front of the house and looking down the area, a policeman going in and out and keeping up the excitement, the beerman from the "George" calling for the quart pots as usual, and retiring with an unsympathetic whistle.

Lang's Place was never out of the papers, and much that never got into the papers got into Lang's Place and kept the locality lively.

A cut-throat place by day or night to look at, yet having its redeeming qualities, and its redeeming characters, in the shape of honest



and hard-working men and women. Whether birds of a feather invariably flock together, is not within the writer's knowledge ; but certain it is, that all the professional thieves lived at the end of the street, and down a blind alley in the corner, mixing not with their more reputable neighbours, who kept "themselves to themselves" near the broader thoroughfare leading to Drury Lane. There was a medium class between thieves and labourers—Irish or otherwise—that was strictly confined to the middle of the street. Lodging-houses of the lowest description, where beds were let out at twopence a night, and let down with a run at five in the morning, bringing all sluggards on the backs of their heads ; dark villainous dens, where marine stores were dealt in and *old silver bought*, and watches that had strayed from their owners' pockets in a crowd, and by some chance found their way to Lang's Place, paid for "on the nail ;" chandlers' shops, where business was transacted by the light of a guttering candle on the counter—the gas having been cut off in ages remote ; green-grocers that dealt in last month's garden stock ;

and a tripe-man, who delivered hot-baked sheep's-heads to the community at large, at half-past nine every evening.

In such a retreat—six months after the events related in our last chapter—on the second floor of a house in what might be termed the respectable quarter, were seated a man and a woman. The hour was eight in the evening, the season summer time. It was difficult for a casual observer to tell summer time in Lang's Place—the only traces of vegetation being the stray leaves of cabbages lying about the pavement and roadway. Still, it was unmistakably summer time; windows were open half-way down the street, doors were ajar, and men standing thereat in their shirt-sleeves and with pipes in their mouths; children were squatted in heaps in doorways grinding cherry-stones into links of "watch-chains;" people were extra thirsty, and went to the "George" more frequently; the lodging-house keepers were not doing well, their regular customers preferring dry arches and park seats—the latter to be adopted when the policeman was not in sight to see the park-

railings scaled by houseless and agile Bohemians.

In this house in Lang's Place, then, a man and a woman. The man a tall, square-built, bushy-bearded individual, with a sallow face and sunken eyes—the woman pale and thin, with eyes that were sunken also, but were large, restless eyes, full of anxiety. The man was smoking a long meerschaum pipe, and resting one elbow on the window-sill. The woman was repairing his coat, which he had taken off for that purpose. Man and woman both from the better days, from which their own folly and recklessness had cut them adrift—man and woman who had fallen so low, that to believe in their past affluence was somewhat a stretch of the imaginative powers. In a few words, Robert Bayford and Cissy Daly, who twelve months ago struck up a morganatic match on Chingley Heath.

There they sat in that wretched, ill-furnished room, living exemplifications of the ease with which folly can travel from the apex to the base; proof, if proof were required, of the celerity of down-hill progress, when there

is no wise hand to stay the shuffle of the cards, or the rattle, rattle of the dice-box.

Robert Bayford had gambled away his fortune at the German watering-places, as he would have dissipated one fifty times as great had the opportunity been in his hands. His frankness had become recklessness, his generosity dissipation, and he recked not of the time when the purse should be light, and the base of the social pyramid be gained. There must have been something radically wrong in the constitution of Robert Bayford to have so utterly changed him ; we are not romancists, to throw the whole blame—as he did perhaps in his morbid moments—on the disruption of his engagement with Amy Saville. Had he been less rash in the first instance, had he not fallen into temptation, as a boy might have fallen, with more excuse for his youth and his weakness, we should have seen him to the end of the chapter the same Robert Bayford of the commencement. But once fallen, the descent was the more swift and terrible, for the restraint so long exer-

cised ; and there was no law of reaction to arrest him half-way. We need not trace his downward career, step by step ; the result is before us, and with that we have only to do.

“Are you not going out to-night, Robert?” asked the girl.

“No.”

“The fresh air would brighten you up a bit.”

“Do you want to get rid of me?”

“I!” with a short hysteric laugh ; “that’s a good one.”

“Why don’t you try the fresh air yourself, and not worry me to death with your recommendation of its beneficial and brightening qualities. I’m perfectly content as I am.”

“Don’t you think you might get some more copying, if you tried?”

“I’m not going to try.”

“Very well,” was the weary answer ; “I can starve, if you can.”

The woman sighed as she resumed her tailoring ; Robert Bayford continued to smoke and to watch the woman who had addressed

him. She was still pretty—her face, with that intense look, was a face more full of expression than in the old days. It was a grave, thoughtful face enough at that time.

“I’m not going to starve, girl,” he said, less churlishly, “only don’t worry me just now about going out. I have all those old confounded pains in my joints again—all the little energy in stock oozing out at right angles. How long will that coat take to finish?”

“It’s done.”

“Put on your bonnet then, and we’ll go out together. Never mind the evening dress, Cissy—we have no invitations worth accepting.”

It was bitter mockery enough, but Cissy Daly laughed at it. If his pleasantry had a hollow ring with it, still it was an effort at his old self, and deserved encouragement. It was better than that sullen apathy and acrimony which kept her heart throbbing uneasily. It was something—just a vague something—like the old times!

But Cissy could not go out—she had her

dress to mend, supper to see about, a begging letter, which she had said nothing concerning, to write to a distant relative of her own, the answer to be sent to "X. Y. Z., Post-office, Long Acre." If he would only go out himself and look round for half an hour.

"Well," said he, yawning.

Cissy took this as an assent, and found his hat for him—would have helped him on with his coat, but he declined her assistance somewhat uncourteously, and sent her back to her place for her officiousness.

"Always cross, Robert," she murmured, turning away.

"Do you expect me particularly lively under the circumstances," he said less roughly, as he refilled his meerschaum pipe with tobacco and applied a fusee thereto; "might I not say in reply, 'Always fretful, Cissy?'"

"No, you can't say so—it isn't true," said she, with spirit.

"Times have altered, and tempers alter when times are bad, girl," he said.

"Why don't you write to your brother?"

"You've said that before," he said, with

the acerbity of his disposition more fully developed; "I will not hear it again, mind you. I'd rather die in an hospital ward than ever see his face again, or ask for help from him. It's all gone between us," he said, flinging his hands in the air, as though he tossed it away of his own free will; "he's a respectable man, and I'm a fellow living on my wits—a scamp, a blackleg, a vagabond. Never say a word to me again concerning any one whom I have known or spoken of."

He went out of the room with a quick, impatient tread. After a moment's interval, he came back into the room as rapidly as he had left it—catching Cissy crying by this retrograde movement.

"I'm coming back to kiss you, Cissy."

"Oh, Robert!"

She flung her arms round his neck, and returned his kiss passionately. She kept her arms there, and looked very wistfully into his face.

"You are not tired of me—you won't throw me off now?"



“What, that old cry! It is I who should ask that, now all the money’s gone.”

“All the love is not. Oh, Bayford, if I went with you for your money, as you taunt me sometimes—it isn’t for your money that I wish to stay here, ever with you as your wife would have been in this trouble.”

“We’re a pair of fools,” was the uncomplimentary rejoinder; “and we shan’t improve, I am inclined to think. And you are the most foolish of the two—to stay here and care anything for a fellow like me.”

He pressed her in his arms, however, with a rough affection, that seemed to please her; and then went out of the room, and down the rickety stairs into the street.

He turned into the broad thoroughfares—made somewhat boldly or defiantly for Catherine Street, and passed through that locality, sacred to newsvenders and coffee-shops, into the Strand. He appeared to have no fear of meeting any of his past associates, but went slouching on his profitless way, with his meerschaum pipe between his lips. Possibly he had confidence in the huge beard

and moustache that he had grown—or knew human nature thoroughly, and felt that he had no occasion to hide from his past friends, they being assuredly ready enough to hide from him, should they see him in that costume approaching their way.

The sky was dark and the streets were aflame with gas when the wanderer took up his position against the lamp-post that stands in the centre of the crossing between Northumberland House and Morley's Hotel. It was a strange halting-place—stranger still to see this man drop into a deep reverie, forgetful of time and place, and the stream of people flowing steadily, persistently past him. The policeman regarded him suspiciously; the crossing-sweeper felt him an intrusion; little boys and girls in a hurry fell over his feet; nervous old women charged him with points of umbrellas whilst eluding cabs and omnibuses; strangers to the locality—country folk and foreigners—put questions to him regarding streets and squares and public buildings, and got, more often than not, meaningless stares for a reply. Not that

Robert Bayford was intentionally rude—in his low estate, to the stranger who addressed him, he would have been courteous and of service if it were possible, but there was *a drag* in his thoughts that night; they rose not readily to the surface, and ere he had mastered the idea presented to him, the stranger, with a half scared look, had left him to follow again the thread of the reverie he had disturbed. He was not well; in his heart he felt that poverty and hard fare, and close narrow streets, agreed not with him—warped his temper, oppressed his brain, ever incessantly worried him, and kept him feverish. He did not know how long he could stand it—it was an unwholesome, unnatural existence, and his was a philosophy that only bore with it externally.

This philosophy—such as it was—was destined to stand a trial that night; he had taken his place there defiantly—his own fault for his foolhardiness, if faces he had met flashed from the crowd, and lit up with recognition! Suddenly there was a face looking into his own that he remembered vaguely—a very earnest face of its kind, almost fierce

with the intentness with which it surveyed him. The shabby habiliments, the beard and moustaches, the want of energy in the listless attitude he had assumed—each and all parts of a new and worse estate foreign to the old, and yet offering no disguise to the man, suddenly standing before him in the lighted streets and whispering his name.

“Robert Bayford.”

He would brazen it out.

“Who says so?”

“I say so,” was the impetuous response.

“Robert Bayford, late of Chipnam. A man we have all been very anxious about.”

“*We*?”

“Yes, we, sir,” with a slight jump in the air, that identified the speaker to even the dulled faculties of Bayford; “I, sir, amongst the number, not the least anxious for your welfare, moral and spiritual. You recognize me?”

“I think I do. You’re a fire-eating dis-senter, of the name of Grade.”

“Glade,” corrected the other; “Josiah Glade, your brother-in-law.”

“ Oh!—it has come to that at last? Well, I'm sorry for it. Poor Susan!”

Josiah, ever quick to dart off at a tangent, took fire at this.

“ What do you mean by poor Susan?”

“ A strange life for her—a strange match.”

“ She's as happy as the day is long, sir.”

“ Impossible!”

“ Don't you think I am calculated to make a woman happy?”

“ Upon my soul, I don't!” was the frank answer.

There was something in Robert Bayford's laugh that followed this, more frank and genuine than there had been for a long while—the vexation and chagrin in Josiah Glade's countenance were so highly developed. Glade did not relish the laugh, however—his surprise at meeting Robert Bayford had given way to his indignation at his brother-in-law's sweeping comments upon his sister's marriage felicity. He would argue the point with him.

“ She is as happy as the day is long, sir,” he repeated. “ We are both happy, thank God—we love each other, and have faith.”

Bayford winced. The man spoke earnestly of his marriage condition—he who was living in sin had surely no right to sneer at this man's genuineness. Possibly his sister Susan understood Glade better than he did.

“ Well, I am glad to hear it,” said he.

“ And to believe it ?”

“ And to believe it. What object have you in deceiving a man fallen so low as myself ?”

He spoke with a Timon-like acridity, and the interest on the face before him seemed to increase in intensity. Glade was full of the old subject once more ; the happiness of his wife Susan was not a fit topic for argument before Northumberland House.

“ We feared this fall, Mr. Bayford. Your brother, Mr. Alland, and I, were all afraid that a calamity like this had befallen you.”

“ An odd triumvirate to put their heads together and mourn over my decadence.”

Bayford thrust his hands to the depths of his pockets, and smoked his pipe in an equable manner. He had taken things easily of late ;

he did not intend to show this man that there was anything in the world likely to affect him.

“Not all that think about you in Chipnam, sir,” said Glade; “for there are others more sanguine. Your sister Susan believes you will return; Miss Saville believes you will return—a repentant, sober, industrious gentleman.”

“Women have more faith than men, consequently—poor things!—are more easily deceived. A stern truth, Mr. Glade, that accounts for those who walk these heartless streets.”

“You’re not exactly the man to moralize on that score,” said Glade, with his customary sharpness.

“Oh! the best moralist is not the best Christian. Haven’t you found that out?”

“The best Christian and the best moralist I have ever known is your brother James,” was the answer.

“Ah! old Jemmy—I hope he’s well?”

The instant afterwards Robert Bayford was vexed with himself that he had shown his

natural interest so clearly, but it was too late to retract. Josiah Glade was always ready with his answer.

“He’s well, sir, and as happy as it is possible to be under the circumstances. He is married to my sister.”

“Ah!—indeed!” said the other, with an affected yawn.

“The uncertainty of your welfare—of your mode of life—keeps him unsettled somewhat. There’s little doubt, sir, that he is anxious concerning *you*.”

“Tell him I’m not worth a thought.”

“I’m sure I shan’t.”

“Tell him,” continued Robert, not heeding the short response to his suggestion, “that it is better for him and his to wholly forget me. That I intend, by every effort of my own, to strive for that forgetfulness by never crossing his path to hinder his felicity.”

“You hinder it by your absence—you know that,” urged Josiah Glade; “you keep him tortured by perplexity.”

“He will get over it in time.”

“You must give me more news, sir, for



your brother. Where and with whom you are living—how you are living—what are your means of support—how is it that you are reduced to so sad an extremity? Your brother must see you.”

“Never, by God!” ejaculated Bayford.

“That will do, sir—that will do!” said the shocked Glade; “don’t swear to that which it is not in your power to prevent—which chance might bring about, despite any opposition of your own.”

“I will never see him of my own free will; he who is the agent to so cruel a meeting is my enemy, and I will hate him!”

They were the eyes of a wild beast behind the tobacco-pipe, but they daunted not Josiah Glade. In his heart he liked opposition; he had had too much of his own way lately. Here was a nice change for him!

“You will acknowledge him to be your friend some day.”

“Don’t talk like a fool!”

Bayford was roused. He was standing waiting his opportunity to cross the road and leave this tiresome companion. Of him and

his irritating remarks he had had enough.

“You will give me your address, that your brother may write to you?”

“Not I.”

“It is important. There is money owing ——”

“The money I want, I know how to earn. Good evening, Mr Glade.”

“I shan’t lose sight of you.”

“You intend to follow me home?”

“Yes.”

“Against my will and consent?”

“For your own sake and your brother’s.”

“You will soon be tired of the attempt.”

“I’m not so easily tired!”

“Your wife will be getting anxious about you. It may take me a week to reach home.”

“If it took you a month, I shouldn’t leave you. I promised your brother to find you out, if it were possible.”

“This way, it is impossible.”

“We’ll try it,” said Glade, with an emphatic jerk of his head.

“Well—we’ll try it!”

Robert Bayford crossed the road, and Glade

followed him. On the opposite pavement Robert said,

“If you will not spare me your company—at least do not worry me by talking of Chipnam, and those I once knew there. Don’t attempt to drive me mad that way, or I may forget myself.”

“I wish to discover your address—I will, if you wish it, merely keep you in sight.”

“I merely wish you to attempt that.”

Josiah Glade fell back a few paces. Robert Bayford, as he walked slowly up St. Martin’s Lane, filled his pipe afresh from his tobacco-pouch, relighted his meerschaum, and returned the pouch to his pocket. This was a novel position for him, and promoted a little healthy excitement. Here was a game at cross purposes with Josiah Glade, an obstinate dissenter, whom he had never particularly admired. He would give him a walk through the Slough of Despond, and see how he admired it. This Josiah Glade should remember playing the spy till the last day of his life.

Slowly up St. Martin’s Lane to the lively neighbourhood of Seven Dials, went Robert

Bayford, picking out the dirtiest and least reputable streets; stopping before the wine-vaults and beer-shops, where the company was boisterous or quarrelsome; passing through the swing glass doors into the interior, and wasting time at the bar over a glass of neat gin, which he drank with the air of a connoisseur in the fiery element. It was a terrible ordeal for so stern and pure-minded a man as Glade, but then he had been born with the bump of dogged resolve strongly developed, and his mind was made up not to lose sight of Robert Bayford. Scenes, characters, and language, of which he had had no previous knowledge, he made acquaintance with that night. But Robert Bayford remained in sight, and through the weary evil ways he led him, Glade saw good to evolve, and held fast. Men pushed against him, and sought to quarrel with him; horrible women, with their hair loose over their faces, and bearing only a shadowy resemblance to womanhood by their ragged habiliments, clutched him by the arm, begged for drink, and called him "my dear,"—and one boy picked his pocket of a

silk handkerchief, and raced away down a court with the spoil!

Still he must keep Robert Bayford in sight. He was a man not easily beaten on the field of opposition—all this warmed his blood, and kept him active. Robert's blood, meanwhile, had begun to warm too. "The fun of the thing" had become wearisome, and the annoyance of this rigid surveillance was increasing in inverse ratio. He was tired of dragging this obstinate dissenter through the streets, and wished to be home again, safely hidden from the man who had resolved to track him to his lair. Had he possessed the money, he would have taken a cab, and tried to elude him that way; he was once strong of limb and fleet of foot, and he cursed the unnatural weakness that now left him incapable of out-walking or out-running him. Once the impulse seized him to turn round and strike the man—but he restrained the desire. He was his sister's husband, and meant him no harm.

The watched and the watcher went on through the streets, returning more than once

to the starting-point in the Strand, where the glare of gas-lamp was becoming more subdued, and being hidden by window-shutters. Robert Bayford felt very weary with his long perambulations ; he counted the money in his pocket, and then, with a grim smile, went round to the gallery of the Adelphi Theatre, paid his sixpence for half-price, and mounted the stairs, followed by the indefatigable dissenter. Josiah Glade did not know whither he was being led, but he saw sixpence paid, and he imitated the example of him he was anxious should not escape.

He groaned when he found himself in a theatre—a place of amusement he had inveighed against many hundreds of times—when looking down over the closely-packed heads, he saw the bright scene beyond, heard the music playing, saw a dance of thirty women in short skirts, who were going through a *ballet d'action* in a burlesque of common sense that was then having “a run.”

He sat and writhed, looked down, beat his fingers nervously on his knees, and was deaf to the solicitations of other “half-pricers,” who

had taken their seats behind him, and desired his hat off, and finally tilted it off unceremoniously, for his want of attention to their demands. Robert Bayford on a seat in front of him enjoyed his embarrassment, and ran over in his mind where he could take him after the play was over, that would disgust him more with London life. He congratulated himself on the signs of weariness and disgust visible on his brother-in-law's countenance, and felt a little better-tempered at having scored one against him. Then he thought of Cissy Daly sitting alone in that wretched room in Lang's Place, and fidgeting about his absence, and crying—as she always cried, the little fool!—when there was anything out of the common way to disturb her. A crying, impulsive, sensitive fool that girl had always been; sanguine in her way, inclined to trust in everything and everybody; one who easily made friends, and was touched deeply by kind words or looks—she had been led astray by them in the early days and brought to ruin. Well, her ruin did not lie at his door, thank God; he had been faithful

to her ; in his own way he loved her now. At that very moment he was anxious concerning her and her distress at his absence, though the morbid pleasure of vexing Josiah Glade began to flash up a little, now he felt less tired with his desultory walk.

But he had spent more money than he could afford in baffling the dissenter, and yet the man was not baffled. He could scarcely see the way to leave him in the lurch.

Before a farce which was to follow the burlesque and wind up the evening's entertainment, one or two of the gallery folk retired for liquid nourishment, and came back ere the curtain was drawn, full of beer and the night's news.

"There's such a fire in Long Acre," he heard one say, "just broken out!"

"We shall get a chance of seeing it after the play's over," remarked another.

A fire in Long Acre! Robert Bayford would take Josiah Glade to that fire; in the crowd there would be a chance to elude his persecutor. He rose, stepped from seat to seat to the gallery door, and went hurriedly



down the staircase ; he could hear the feet of Josiah Glade pattering quickly after him.

In the street and down the first turning, at an increased rate of progression—striking for Covent Garden Market and Wellington Street, followed by Glade still. The people were thickening here ; the sky was lurid with the reflection of the flames ; there was a roar of voices like an angry sea beyond, where the smoke and sparks and flitting shadows were ; to keep that pace a little longer and mingle with the crowd, would shut him from the man who haunted him, and who would drag him back to the past he dared not face ! He knew Glade was close upon him, but his strength seemed to have returned, and the pursuer was fighting very hard to keep up with him. A little further on, the dense mass of humanity would be gained, and he could plunge therein, as into a sea, and be lost.

Hurrah ! It was reached, and he flung himself into the midst, receiving oaths and buffets, and heeding neither, as he fought his way wildly to its depths, and then quietly and artfully worked back again towards the street

that would lead to Lang's Place — and home.

One glance round assured him that Josiah Glade was no longer at his heels ; that, after all his trouble and persistence, Glade had failed in the object for which he had striven. Robert hurried to Lang's Place, listened in the dark street for two or three minutes to make sure that he was not followed—cowering in a doorway, and shivering like a man with an ague.

He was safe. He crossed the road and gave two knocks at the door—sign to all in that house that the first floor front had come home, and that it was nobody's business to attend to the summons save the pale-faced, large-eyed woman who made such a fuss over her "fancy man."

Cissy opened the door, and Robert stumbled into the passage like a drunkard. Cissy's first idea was that he had been drinking, till she held the candle to his face.

"Oh! Robert, you're ill!" she cried.

"I don't know what's the matter," he muttered; "I have been worried, hunted to death. Feel my hand, how hot it is!"

“Come up stairs, Robert—you’ll be better after you have lain down a little while. Oh! dear—shall I run for the doctor?”

“What do I want with a doctor, do you think? If he could do me any good, would he not be a worse enemy than the man I have been dodging to-night? Here, help us up-stairs, Ciss.”

## CHAPTER II.

## NEW FRIENDS.

ROBERT BAYFORD had been falling out of health for many weeks—slowly but surely losing with every day some portion of his old spirits, his old energy and strength. Poverty had not agreed with him, though he had sought it of his own reckless will, though he had seen himself and that grisly spectre at the bottom of the hill approaching closer and closer every day. Poverty and the wretched lodgings in Lang's Place had tested him to the utmost; the air of the pent-up neighbourhood had not agreed with him; sitting in that

miserable one room—he who had once possessed a prince's mansion—was like sitting in a prison awaiting his sentence.

And the sentence came. The last night's excitement with Josiah Glade had accelerated that which had been slowly making its way towards him for some time; the day following the strange meeting in the Strand, Robert Bayford was fighting hard with fever in Lang's Place.

A long fight as well as a hard one, which lasted through the summer to the first autumn month—a wearying, intermittent gastric fever, which took him to death's door, drew him back to life, hurried him by a sudden relapse to the shadowy threshold again, brought him once more to a sense of existence, and to the knowledge of whose face it was that day and night, night and day, bent over him and kept faithful watch. In the first autumn month he was better; the parish doctor had fought well with the disease, and finally mastered it, leaving the sufferer with a child's strength in his bed. Everything readily pawnable had been disposed of by that time,

even to the outer coat of Robert Bayford, and the last flannel skirt of the woman who was living with him. He had thought the place the picture of abjectness before the fever; now, when his eyes once more took stock of passing events, he became aware of a lower stage of poverty than that which he had bargained for, when he betted on the red and black at Homburg. The little ornaments, only worth a few pence at the best of times, were stripped from the mantel-piece, along with a cracked looking-glass that had hung there; there was a blanket or two less on the bed; the floor was bare; the faithful watcher was scantily clad, and looked like a ghost from old times. Poor ghost of a living woman, whose very faithfulness was a sin against society—our hand drops the stone we would hurl at thee!

“Any one been, Ciss?” were almost his first words.

“Been—who is likely to have been, except the doctor?”

“I don’t know—I was hunted hard some time ago.”

“No one has been, then—I wish somebody had, Robert, for your sake.”

“To take me away from you, and tell you what a wicked creature you are—what a woman!”

“I’d wish anything, and do anything, for you!”

“I think you would, Ciss,” was the feeble response; “and so we’ll be true to each other till death doth us part. You’re the only friend left, and I’m too selfish to let you go.”

“Oh! Robert!”

The woman stooped over him and kissed his forehead—her lip quivered at the change in him, and he saw it.

“You must look very bright and rosy, now I am getting better, girl.”

“I’ll—I’ll try.”

“There’s nothing to fret about.”

“Oh! yes, there is—because all this is my fault. Because I ought to have advised you—run away from you long ago.”

“Run away from me!—you hadn’t the will, Ciss.”

After a time, Cissy Daly said, somewhat suddenly :

“ Oh ! there *has* been some one inquiring after you, Robert.”

“ The deuce there has !”

“ The lodger in the second-floor back, you used to meet on the stairs sometimes ; the man you helped to his room one night when he was very drunk, Robert. The man we met at Homburg.”

“ The odd fish—the man of the streets, streeety ? I remember him.”

“ Would you—would you like to see him, Robert ?”

“ I can't say that I care much for his society. Does he want to see me ?”

“ Yes. Every day for the last week he has seemed a little anxious to spend an hour or two with you—to relieve guard, in fact, and take my nurse's place away from me.”

“ I would as soon be nursed by an old ape.”

“ Still, I think he would be glad to hear you were better,” said Cissy ; “ when you were a little stronger, he said, he thought



he might be able to cheer you up a bit."

"I was always fond of society—he may come, if he likes, to-morrow."

When the morrow came, the lodger on the floor above, and in the room at the back in lieu of the front of the house—consequently, a lodger whose circumstances were infinitely more reduced than their own—was asked to step in for a few moments, and keep Mr. Bayford company.

He entered in a sidelong manner, and edged his way towards the bed—an old, grey-haired, wrinkled-faced man, with two restless eyes of the colour of his hair. A man poor and rugged enough to even look disreputable in Robert Bayford's bed-room.

"Well, how fares it with thee, my son?" he asked, in a manner that verged a little on the melodramatic.

"Better, thank you—we have beaten the fever out at last."

"I'm glad to hear it," said he, taking a chair at the bed's foot, and beginning to nurse one knee very tenderly; "I was afraid

there would have been sharp work made of you once. I am very glad."

"I don't see what you have to be glad about," said Bayford, with a short laugh.

"I'll tell you. You've been a friend in your way—at Homburg you lent me a sovereign, like a trump; and when I've been a little too free with the wine-cup, I have had your assistance up the accursed stairs, that never seem twice alike under one's feet. So I took to you."

"Indeed!"

"You were a man who had a good word for me, and—

'Stripped as I am of all the golden fruit  
Of self-esteem; and by the cutting blasts  
Of self-reproach familiarly assailed,'—

a good word is like a good shilling, ever thankfully received."

He said it in a scoffing manner, and with a glitter in his eyes, that mocked at his appreciation of past kindness; Robert Bayford regarded him over the counterpane as a singular specimen of humanity. Still, he was an old man, whose eccentricities might amuse him;

he was a man who spoke at times like a scholar and a gentleman; he had dropped like a stone from a higher sphere, after a fashion like his own, perhaps. There was some satisfaction in meeting with a man—however great a scamp he might be—who was not quite ignorant of the manners and customs of a world from which both had fallen.

“I little thought, when you first made your appearance in Lang’s Place, that I should ever have the pleasure of sitting here the guest of Robert Bayford,” said the man; “I have an idea, now, that you and I will become very good friends. An odd idea, eh?”

“Very.”

“Devilish sorry was I to hear of your illness—devilish vexed, too, that I had not out-lived long ago feeling sorry about anything or anybody. Most people who know me would laugh, if they thought you believed that I was speaking the truth now.”

Bayford did not understand him—did not attempt to discover whether he were really sorry, or if all this were pleasant banter peculiar to him. He felt too weak to sift motives, and

too careless to study them just then—the man rattled on and amused him. When he grew weary, he would whisper to Cissy to ask him to go.

“You and I must have two extraordinary stories to tell, Mr. Bayford,” said he, with that peculiar twinkle in his eyes again. “I have been anxious about yours ever since you stalked in like a ghost to these horrid quarters, and turned me all goose-flesh.”

“I don’t think you’ll ever hear it,” was the blunt response.

“Confidence for confidence,” replied the old man; “mine would surprise you in no small degree, I assure you. I have been possessed with the same spirit to tell you my story, as leads a man to jump from a height into Hades. But I will not trouble you now.”

“He must not be harassed,” murmured Cissy, “the doctor says so.”

“True, madam. I bow to the wise assertion of Æsculapius—to harass a sick man is to strike at him with a dagger. And the past would harass both him and me. ‘*Le souvenir*

*de la félicité perdue, est le plus cruel des souvenirs.'"*

"Hush, hush!—he understands French."

"And you also? This is the polite society that I have craved for many years. You won't shut the door against the old man if he behave himself, Mrs. Bayford?"

Cissy Daly winced at the title, and the eccentric man noticed the start. When she had quitted the room for an instant, he turned to Robert abruptly,

"Not your wife?"

"Not yet," muttered Robert with a lowering brow.

"Right you are," said this easy old sinner;

"'Wives are but fair afflictions,'

Randolph says; and Randolph was as right in his day, as you are in yours. Mr. Bayford, let me congratulate you on your caution."

"You need not," was the dry response.

"Slaves have been always more faithful than wives from ages remote. You remember what Byron says?"

"Change the subject, if you please, or I will wish you good morning."

“ I have finished. Excuse my rambling incoherencies ; my head is not what it used to be. It was a fine head once, Mr. Bayford.”

“ Before you muddled it with drink ?”

“ Just so ; but then I was fond of drink, and so the head went to the wall and got cracked a little.”

“ You have been muddling it this morning, Mr. ——.”

“ Mr. Dalland—that’s the name I go by here,” said he frankly ; “ and I have been muddling it, just a little, in anticipation of my quarterly allowance, that will fall due on the twenty-ninth of this month. I raised a couple of pounds on seventy-five shillings and sixpence at the bloated capitalist’s in Lang’s Place, the man who speculates in honest folk’s failings. I drank to your better health with them, and I bought four ounces of black tea for you, which I placed on the mantel-piece before I sat down.”

“ Take it away !” shouted Bayford.

His vehemence brought his wife back into the room.

“ Tell this old humbug to be off !” he cried,

*de la félicité perdue, est le plus cruel des souvenirs.' ”*

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shaking with passion ; “ this man with his obtrusive charity and his black tea offerings. We haven’t fallen so low yet ; we aren’t beggars, Ciss, quite.”

Old Alland—to the reader we need not attempt to disguise this gentleman by a flimsy veil he would see through—had risen from his seat with a half frightened, half defiant look. Drink had been unstringing his nerves for years — he was far from the finished scoundrel of his glorious youth, when he robbed his own partner and brought him to ruin. He had been even thinking once or twice lately of “ the error of his ways,” and promising himself some sort of an amendment when the days were later yet. He had seen Robert Bayford, and taken to him for that reason—and somewhat for the reason that Bayford saw he had been a gentleman, or rather that he had received a gentleman’s education. There was a strange secret kind of enjoyment in making the acquaintance of one he had wronged, and for weeks and months he had striven for it with a persistence strangely at variance with his listless

and indifferent nature. Some of these days, when they were great friends, he would tell Robert Bayford his story, gaining his forgiveness that way, and so standing clear in that matter of conscience, which had oppressed him so long. That would be his way of squaring accounts concerning that "old affair in Fleet Street." He was very weak, or very drunk that morning, for he begged with tears in his eyes that they would accept his tea-offering. He knew that they were very poor—what was he himself?—would they accept it *in memoriam*? In memory of a past kindness that assisted him upstairs after a soiree *al fresco* on the kerb-stones opposite the "Jolly Gardeners"—one good turn surely deserved another, and Cissy Daly was looking so wistfully at the tea!

Robert Bayford accepted the gift, and old Alland retired muttering his thanks. The door had hardly closed behind him, when he turned the handle unceremoniously and re-entered.

"You'll be out of bed to-morrow. Trying

change of air and scene by looking out of window, Mr. Bayford?"

"Perhaps so. I am tired enough of lying here."

"I've an easy chair in my room, rough but comfortable. My neighbour and I will bring it down between us in the course of the day. When shall I call and help to amuse you again, sir?"

"When you like."

"I'll bring my chess-board and men, and we'll have a bout at the 'Royal Game.' You play chess?"

"I did once."

"Every gentleman plays at chess—to be sure. Lend me all the corks out of the medicine bottles, Mrs. Bayford, and I'll amuse myself the rest of the day in manufacturing a few pawns. A thousand thanks. *Vale.*"

The old man took his departure, and amused himself for at least part of the day in the manufacture of the articles he had mentioned. It was a monotonous employment, however, which he gave up before nightfall and crept downstairs into the street. And

from the street to the gin-shop, when there was money in his pockets, was always the first step with old Fred Alland.

He spent the rest of the night at the "Jolly Gardeners," treating a few gin-drinking cronies whom he was in the habit of meeting there, and astonishing not a little by his quotations and excerpts—which flowed the more readily from him the more liquor he imbibed.

Still all the drink of that night, all the noises in his head the following morning, did not make him forget his intention of playing chess with Robert Bayford, or of lending that gentleman a horse-hairless and mangy-looking chair, which he considered might be conducive to his further comfort and delectation.

And Robert Bayford and Alland played their first game at chess together with great interest and animation, with Cissy Daly flitting at the back, and looking wistfully at the players—at one player in particular, who she feared might tax his strength too far at the outset.

If the Reverend James Bayford and the

Reverend Frederick Alland could have seen the chess-players at that moment—could have dreamed of two such men becoming friends and comrades in the latter days!

## CHAPTER III.

## T E R G I V E R S A T I O N .

THE companionship between Robert Bayford and old Alland gathered a certain amount of strength with every day. It was a strange companionship, in which Alland became more nervous and less at his ease each time he made his appearance in the first floor front, and Bayford learned no respect for the grey hairs that took him into his confidence.

Bayford had plenty of time to estimate the character of the man who came so regularly to play chess with him, whose conversation, when drink allowed him to be sufficiently articulate, was of an odd, *bizarre*, patchwork

character, that told of much study of mankind and the world, and gave proof of much desultory reading. That the old man was an irreclaimable scamp, was fully evident ; he made no scruple to disguise his faults and failings ; he had no sense of honour ; evil-speaking, lying, and slandering were peculiarities of his ; he spoke well of no one ; had no belief in anything good on earth, or to be obtained from heaven. He was a wicked old atheist, and scoffed at everything ; but the man was good company, and concerning the morals of his guest, Robert Bayford cared nothing now. The man's society pleased him—it could do him no harm ; he could play chess like an Anderssen ; he knew a little of everything, and expressed his opinion in a manner that was new to him, at least ; he had taken a fancy to the invalid ; he was charitable in his way, and inclined to force little presents upon Robert and his companion—charities which they at last became too poor to refuse.

One night, Alland asked Robert why he did not apply for relief to his relatives. Robert opened his large brown eyes—looking larger

and browner than ever since his fever—and asked how he knew that he had relatives.

“ I know the life and adventures of all my comrades,” he replied ; “ why should I be ignorant of yours in particular ? ”

“ What do you know ? ”

“ That you have a brother who would think nothing of sending you a hundred pound cheque. A brother who is a rising man, and a popular preacher.”

“ You know too much for me,” was the significant comment to this.

Alland looked alarmed.

“ Don’t send me adrift, my dear friend,” he implored ; “ I have taken a fancy to you, such a fancy as I haven’t had since I was a younger man by two-score years. I won’t split on you—I’ll guard your secret as if it were my own.”

“ I have done with you—shut up the chess-board.”

“ There is none can wound me so,  
Nor that has half thy cruelty ! ”

cried Alland ; “ what interest could I have, my friend, in betraying you to the Philistines ? ”



“They would pay you handsomely in Chipnam for a knowledge of my whereabouts.”

“To the foul fiends with their handsome pay!” said Alland, in his best dramatic style. “Shall I gain a few pounds, and lose the only friend I have in the world?”

“You will keep my secret?”

“By the holy mother, yes!” swore Alland, with the utmost alacrity.

“I’ll trust you,” said Bayford.

Alland made no reply, but his keen grey eyes took stock of the thoughtful face, and the firm lips that held between them the everlasting meerschaum pipe. He did not like the expression; it told of vanishing away from Lang’s Place, and leaving no sign.

Robert Bayford was, however, far too weak to make a successful flitting yet awhile, and old Alland endeavoured to dismiss from his thoughts a subject that disturbed him. But the thought oppressed him, and he stole away, after a while, to the “Jolly Gardeners” to consider the matter under all its varied aspects. There were two or three shillings still in his pocket, and he began to spend them on his

favourite diluter, clearing his faculties gradually as he went on. Heavens! how clever he was when the gin was in; after the first glass or two, what bright thoughts he had!—he could write a leading article for any paper under the sun, if the paper were handy, after the second glass. But then he had never stopped at the second glass—something always led him on to a third and a fourth; and after that, though his ideas were dazzling and brilliant, and hosts of things he had long ago forgotten flitted across his memory, they were the coruscations of the meteor, hard to fix or make capital from.

He drank gin enough that night to arrive crying drunk at the house in Lang's Place again—to the identical room where Robert Bayford still sat smoking his pipe, and endeavouring to teach Cissy Daly the art of Chess-play.

He entered crying drunk, to make a fool of himself—to make a clean breast of his sin, the old, old sin of stealing his neighbour's goods, and that neighbour Robert Bayford's father! It was sham melodrama and gin, and Robert

laughed a little—treated the whole matter lightly enough, though he believed every word that the old man related to him.

It was the story related by the senior Glade to his son some months ago; nothing was extenuated, the unrepentant old sinner seemed even in that hour to parade his own cunning somewhat too ostentatiously before his listeners. He talked of his sorrow and trouble and despair; he quoted from “Philaster,” and raved about

“Nature too unkind,  
That made no medicine for a troubled mind.”

He implored Robert’s forgiveness all the more because he was morally wrong, and he doubted if the law could touch him, or harm a hair of his head.

“It was clear robbery, but the proofs were hard to get at, and I was senior partner, you see. It’s because I robbed the father that I would make amends to the son—that I would ask the son to bear no malice against me.”

“I have a faint idea of hearing part of the story before; I knew my father was involved, and that something had gone wrong some-

where. I bear no malice—I'm only sorry that you were such a scamp and a black-leg, and that I have the honour of your acquaintance."

"I may come and see you now and then still? It's real penitence, Mr. Bayford, upon my honour!"

"Come and see me, if you will. I'm a scamp, too, after my own fashion," said the easy Robert.

"Enough of this—let private sorrows rest,"

cried Alland. "I've made a clean breast of it. I'm so happy, now the load's off my conscience! Let me run and fetch a bottle of 'Old Tom,' to commemorate this eventful night."

"I mustn't take anything stronger than beef-tea yet," said Robert. "Go to bed, Alland, and sleep the sleep of the penitent and the forgiven."

"Amen to you! Good night; my blessing on you both, *mes enfans!*"

He was going out at the door, when Robert called him back, to remind him that he had confessed to the name of Alland, to being the

father of the rector of Chipnam, to being supported by an annual stipend by that rector.

“ I believe all this ; I shall remember all that you have told me longer than you will, perhaps. Try and remember now what I am going to tell you,” said Robert.

“ ‘ The wine has got into his head,  
As the frost into a hand that is benumbed,’ ”

ran on Alland ; “ but he will forget nothing. He never forgets.”

“ Don’t forget that I am dead and buried to your son, to my brother, to all who have known or heard of me in days when I was more worthy of a thought. If you betray me, when I am strong enough I’ll break every bone in your skin.”

Alland went through an heroic harangue, calling all the thunderbolts of fate on his head if he ever betrayed his friend’s secret—swearing by the stars, by his love for his friend, by the forgiveness, free and open as the day, which that friend had vouchsafed to him, by every adjuration which he could think of at the moment ; and his thoughts flowing freely, he

thought a great deal, and kept the door ajar much longer than Robert Bayford approved.

He went away to the "Jolly Gardeners," spent his last penny there, and began a fresh score on the spot; finally came staggering home to Lang's Place at two in the morning. How he lived during the next week was known best to himself: he had odd ways and means of living, or thieving, known but to his inscrutable self; finally becoming desperate, he started on a walking expedition to Chipnam, as he had done many times before, when quarter-day was near, and he was pressed hard.

We need not dwell upon this expedition at any length; we have no particular wish to keep our readers longer in company of this unprincipled reprobate than is necessary. Still, much evolved from that visit to Chipnam; and it is essential to say, that he forgot all his old promises, in his anxiety to put a few more pounds in his pocket, whilst the chance presented itself. Such a windfall might never drop to his share again; why should he neglect it, or allow

some one more sharp than he to snatch the purse of money that was handy to his touch?

Was he not really doing good for Robert Bayford?—rescuing him from “poverty, hunger, and dirt,” and fifty other things equally objectionable. As a moralist, he was bound to put good men on his track; as a philanthropist, he was necessitated to point out to those who wished to help, one who required much assistance; as a man of business, he would be a fool to turn away from a chance of doubling his next quarter’s salary. So, “for a consideration,” he informed his son of Robert Bayford’s condition, where he was living, what he was doing, how ill he had been, and how poor he was; and then, anxious to kill two birds with one stone, ran immediately to the residence of the Reverend James Bayford, told the news in breathless haste, hastened to explain that he was a messenger who had come direct from Lang’s Place, from motives of pure disinterestedness; finally obtained twenty pounds from the minister, by way of

gratuity, and went on his way exulting at the golden shower that had followed his revelation.

“An open confession is as good for the pocket as the soul,” he said to himself that night; “and, after all, I am doing—for the first time in my life—a vast amount of good. Robert Bayford will bless me with his dying breath. He’s a fine fellow—a lad after my own heart. Pity he has so little firmness of disposition!”

He shook his head over that weakness, as he paused on the step of the “Chipnam Arms,” before marching in like a lord.

Meanwhile, Frederick Alland and James Bayford had met each other on the high-road, both hurrying towards each other’s house with the good news of Robert Bayford’s discovery. They walked arm-in-arm back to the rectory, talking of the best method to save Robert—each listening to the other’s opinion, and weighing it carefully in the balance with his own. They were both interested in Robert; more, they were both working together for



good now, and the result, so far as Chipnam was concerned, was already pleasant and satisfactory.

## CHAPTER IV.

## A RELAPSE.

It was the third week in October, and there were signs already of the coming winter. There was sad promise of a winter harder and more fierce than had been known for years.—the frost had already shown itself in the streets; the nights were already cold and pitiless, and tried those who had not taken to fires yet—who were keeping back that extra drawback on the week's receipts, always so hard to bear up against.

Lang's Place, as we have intimated, showed little signs of the season, so far as its own

particular outward aspect was concerned, but there were fewer of its inhabitants took after supper pipes at their open doors or windows, less shirt-sleeves than usual, and no open-air meetings to speak of—unless a quarrel within doors necessitated a turn-out into the street, and a general settlement of disputes in the muddy road-way.

There had been frost already that year—there had been five minutes snow on the afternoon of that very day when we look in upon Robert Bayford and Cissy Daly, at their old quarters in the house to which more than once we have conducted the reader.

Matters were proceeding in the usual manner there; there had been little alteration since old Alland's visits suddenly ceased. The few things pawned at the shop round the corner had not been redeemed yet; Robert was still weak, and required careful treatment; it was still an effort to walk across the room, leaning on Cissy's arm.

Cissy Daly had obtained some needlework from a sloop-house in the vicinity, and was using her best exertions to keep house and home

together, till he became more strong and able to add his earnings, whatever they might be, to the common store. They had run terribly into debt by that time—there remained nothing more to pawn; the baker had only said yesterday, “blest if he’d let a single arf quartern more go without the tin for it!”—an inelegant expression, but then he was a baker who lived in Lang’s Place, and English undefiled was not on draught there. Cissy was at work, bending close to the glimmering dip on the table, pale, wan, weary, with a terrible cough—that old portrait of the slave of the needle, which men have written about and moralized upon. Robert Bayford was amusing himself by reading the scrap of newspaper in which Cissy’s work had been wrapped by her employers, and deeply interested was he at that particular juncture—the paper being an Indian one, and containing all the news from the country where he had made his fortune, and been loved and honoured.

“I think, girl, when I am stronger we’ll make a push for India,” he said; “perhaps some of my old energy will turn up when I

feel myself in the old quarters, where all the money was made."

"Where's the money to come from to take us out, Robert?"

"'Ay, there's the rub,' as old Alland would say—I must work for it here, of course. Do you know, Ciss, I have an idea that I shall soon set to work with a will now—that some good luck will turn up for a fellow, if only by way of balance for all the bad luck that has fallen to our share?"

"You don't get strong very rapidly."

"That's the worst of it. What the deuce was that doctor whispering to you about on the stairs to-day?"

Cissy started, and looked at him with a nervous glance.

"Nothing."

"It's no good telling me a lie about it," he said, with his characteristic peevishness; "I heard him mention my name, and say something about a relapse. Does he think I am to be floored again by the accursed disease which has kept me down so long? Hasn't it all gone—haven't I been martyr enough?"

“He—he could hardly understand why you did not become more strong; he—he told me to be very careful of you, Robert, as a relapse might come; as if I hadn’t been careful of you—wouldn’t have died for you!”

“That’ll do, Ciss—don’t get stagey,” reproved her protector; “you’ve been a good girl, and I should have died like a dog here without you. I have been thinking of a reward of merit for all your transcendental kindness, my girl.”

“Ah! don’t laugh at me now—anything but that, Robert!”

“I’m not laughing,” said he; “it’s an odd reward that came into my head—that of giving you a vagabond’s name, and calling you Mrs. Bayford in earnest.”

“Oh! Robert.”

The woman left off her work and leaned across the table with a heightened colour and flushed cheek. Presently she broke into a discordant laugh—a laugh of the old times, when she was a dashing woman, and had

to feign the best of spirits to keep his from utterly sinking.

“Don’t talk such nonsense,” she said, hysterically; “if I had ever been an—an honest woman in your knowledge of me, I might have deserved it. If you were ever so determined, I wouldn’t have it, Robert.”

Her voice gathered firmness, and she looked almost fiercely across the table at him.

“Why not?”

“I’ve been happy with you as I am, that’s why. Some day you would taunt me with your kindness, or regret bitterly the step that tied you to me, or fifty things. I wouldn’t be an honest woman for the world. There’d be never a stroke of luck come to us again.”

“Ah! it would be a bad moral for a story-book,” he said, bitterly; “but still I’ve thought of it—I’m thinking of it. I’ve been a brute to you, you know, fifty times or more; and that’s like a husband, isn’t it? Why shouldn’t I be a real husband? I who have no friends to study, and only you who have been faithful to me, to think about.”

“ We'll talk of this another time, Robert.”

“ Just as you like. Who's that at the door ?”

“ I didn't hear a knock.”

“ That cursed needle-work is making you deaf,” he muttered, as he turned in his easy-chair, and took up the stray leaf of his Indian newspaper again. Cissy had laid her work aside and gone to the door, to which Robert's back was turned, thereby saving Robert the shock of surprise to which she was subjected on seeing the tall figure of James Bayford standing on the landing outside.

The woman stood and shivered at the sight of him. More than once, and when, pushed hard by distress, she had begged Robert to ask relief from his brother, dreading even then some such an interview as this. And now, without seeking for him, he had stolen in upon them, and was coming with his sternness, his cold religion that had no mercy on erring men and women, to tell them of their sins. He would remind her of all that he had said in that grand house in Chipnam—of those awful words that had haunted her at every step



lower in the scale—of the fearful accusation he made then, that for all that followed she—Robert's temptress and guilty companion—would stand answerable to God! She was selfish then, and wanted a home—a refuge from the cruel streets whereunto so many like her are driven. She did not mind his preaching very much then. But now!

He held up his gloved hand—she remembered the dark glove, and that white wristband immediately—and beckoned her into the passage. Cissy followed and closed the door behind her.

“He is ill, I hear. I must not come upon him too suddenly.”

“He is very ill still.”

“But getting better?”

“God knows! I don't,” was the short answer.

“You are growing tired of nursing him?” said James Bayford, in a low voice; “well, it is natural. One cannot expect——”

“Natural!” cried the girl passionately; “it is not natural—I would rather nurse him all my life in that wretched room, than wear my

silks and satins like a lady again, and have all my good looks back. If you think I wouldn't die to see him better, you're awfully mistaken, sir!"

The woman's impetuosity moved him. He was as fair a judge of human nature as most men. A fallen but a faithful woman. A woman faithful to his brother for a kind word or look, and struggling her life out for him in that desolate home—he did not shrink away from her as in the old times to which he had alluded.

"My poor girl, I will not think hardly of you. If you have been kind to Robert, I will thank you for it with all my heart. Will you break the news to him gently that I have come?"

"You come like a shadow, sir, between him and me. I feel it—my God, I know it already!"

"I come to do my best for all—do you blame me?"

"No."

"I come to help to save him—soul and

body—if I can. Will you thwart me, as in the last time of our meeting?”

“I would drop down dead first.”

“He is unhappy?”

“Yes.”

“After the first surprise I think he will be glad to see me—even now.”

“He has always loved you very much, sir,” said the woman; “he has always spoken of you with a full heart, as his dear earnest brother, ever too good for him to know or see again. You will be gentle with him—you will not *preach* to him all at once?”

“No,” murmured the minister.

“For he’s very weak. It has been a hard struggle to fight against the fever. I thought I should have lost him one night! That was the first night I ever tried a bit of prayer since I ran away from home.”

The minister put his hand forth to touch hers, but she drew it hurriedly away. He was too good a man for her—besides, good as he was, there was a latent kind of dislike in her heart towards him. He would part her and Robert—she felt assured of it!

“Break the news to him gently. You have been a tender nurse to him, and know the best way.”

“But if he——”

“Under any circumstances, I must see him.”

The woman turned her pale affrighted face towards him again, and he whispered, “Don’t fear!” at the same moment as a hollow voice called “Cissy” from within the room.

“What on earth have you been after, out there?” he asked sharply, as she entered.

She took her cue from his inquiry.

“Speaking to a friend, Robert.”

Robert Bayford laughed at this.

“Don’t you think we have any friends, Robert—that at some time or other a dear friend may not step forward to help us—to show us that his heart is full and young yet?”

“You don’t talk as if filled with any great delight at the friend’s coming, at any rate,” was the response; “is it old Alland?”

“No.”

“Then it’s a friend with another bill, and you speak ironically. Upon my soul, Ciss, I

didn't give you credit for possessing so fine a vein of satire!"

"No, no—I mean what I say," said she hurriedly; "I'm not satirical; I never was. It is a friend, a dear friend of yours, who has come—don't be alarmed—many, many miles, to shake you by the hand again."

"Ha!"

"Try and guess."

"Don't tell me it's James Bayford. I'd rather die than ——"

"Patience, brother Bob, it's only the first surprise, and then there's nothing to be scared at, old fellow!"

The Reverend James Bayford was at his brother's side, his hand holding fast that brother's, which struggled hard to get away. That great strong brother must have been very much reduced by illness to turn his head away after a moment and give one or two choking sobs, which echoed through the room like minute guns. James Bayford held his hand still, and turned his head away too from his brother's grief, saying nothing in the first few bitter moments of that meeting.

“Well, it’s true,” said Robert suddenly; “I would rather have died than met you again!”

“Why?”

Their hands parted, and Robert twined his tightly together till the joints cracked.

“There is no good to follow our meeting—you can do me none, and I may do you harm. I have gone down too far, too deeply, ever to be worth a thought of yours, Jemmy.”

“There is no depth so low that a strong hand and a firm faith cannot rise from, Bob,” said the other gently.

“I’ve been a scamp and a villain. I shall remain so to the end now. You had better leave me in the den where you have discovered me, than rouse me like a wild beast from my lair.”

“I hear you have been ill,” said the other, turning the conversation.

“Very ill. Ask Cissy.”

“You must come to Chipnam and let my wife nurse you, Bob. There is no chance of getting well in a place like this.”

“Then I shall die here, for I shan’t move.”

“To-morrow we will talk of this—I haven’t come to reason with you, even preach to you, Bob, to-night.”

“Thank you, but it’s your only chance, remember.”

“What do you mean?”

“That I cannot see you to-morrow—that unless you promise not to call here again, I shall try and drag my limbs somewhere away from you. You don’t know how I have changed, Jemmy. Let me call you Jemmy for this once, and don’t feel offended at me.”

“Offended at you, Bob!”

“Look here—there’s no mincing matters, I *am* a terrible scoundrel. I should be ever a disgrace to you and yours; it pains me to see you, and it would kill me, beggar as I am, to receive one farthing of your money. I’ve had my fling, it was all my own fault, and I *will* have no pity, no charity. I hope, when you insult me by the offer of your money, I may drop dead at your feet.”

“Hush!—hush!—I will not insult you, Bob. Let me pledge you my word—if it will

relieve you a little—that my money will not be offered you.”

“That’s well.”

“But my love will—that deep brother’s love which is as strong as ever in me—which will live with you, Bob, despite all and amidst all. The old mother on her dying bed prayed that that might last—we must not forget her!”

“Don’t talk of the old mother,” said Robert, with a quivering lip.

“Ay, but it’s a talisman that has touched us before—that will draw us together again, with God’s help. You and I are the only two Bayfords left—Susan is married, and has a name all to herself—I can’t leave you to go your own way, and make no effort to brighten it.”

“You were always a good fellow,” said Robert, feebly, “but we *must* part! I’ve made up my mind, and there’s no chance of changing it. We shall part friends—that’s a little comfort for a poor devil drifting down to perdition.”

“We will turn the current,” said James,



cheerily; "we will block up the stream, and stop the wilful heart that floats of its own free will down the dark waters, and makes no effort to leap to the bankside. We will save you, Robert, in spite of yourself."

"I will have no meddlers in my affairs—I will go my own way," was the fierce assertion.

"Your way will be mine, Bob."

"No."

"To-morrow we will talk of this."

"We shall part to-night," was the dogged answer.

"I'll not argue with you—you are too weak for argument," said his brother; "there, sit still a bit and compose yourself. I am going to talk with this faithful nurse of yours."

Cissy looked grateful for the remark, and made room for him by the table, at which she was seated. He was talking in a low tone to her, and giving time to his brother to compose himself, when they were both startled by his wild cry, by the torrent of incoherent madness that followed it and paled their cheeks.


It was the beginning of the relapse, of which the doctor had warned Cissy Daly.

## CHAPTER V.

## DOUBTS.

ROBERT BAYFORD's relapse was full of danger, and required constant care. His life was hanging by a thread, and a rash word, a careless action, would sever the tie which bound it to earth, and all on earth that had been left undone in his heedlessness and sin.

The house in Lang's Place, before the week had expired, was the scene of an invasion. The indefatigable James Bayford had attacked all its old lodgers, and cleared the house of them by a liberal payment of their rents in arrear, together with a bonus to cover expenses of transit. The house, with the



exception of Alland's room, that was not intruded upon, the tenant not being forthcoming to bargain for his exodus, belonged to the Bayfords *in toto* at the end of the week—some decent furniture had been sent in, the rooms had been cleaned, James Bayford and his wife Dorcas were living in the house, and taking care of Robert. Cissy Daly was Robert's nurse still. In all his delirium and weakness he knew the woman who had been faithful to him, and would have no other nurse.

To his brother's wife he had at first taken almost a dislike, but her gentleness and kindness had won upon him in some degree, and he could bear her flitting about the background of his room—prompting Cissy Daly, and seconding her efforts.

Robert began to improve after a while, but he was too weak to understand the reason for the change, for the stillness which reigned throughout the house, for the absence of children's voices in that room underneath, whence all the worry had appeared to well during his last illness. He knew that Cissy was with him still, considerate and anxious as ever, and

that his brother's wife was there helping her, and watchful over that deep scene of peace and rest, which, after a while, appeared to follow his illness. So peaceful, so happy in his quiet rest wherein nothing disturbed him, that the thought crossed him, if he could die thus—if he could pass slowly, quietly away from all the harass and turmoil of the world—what a happy death it would be!

When he became a little stronger, which was not till the November month was nine days old, and all the thieves in Lang's Place had gone to attend the civic festival, the peace of mind appeared to vanish away suddenly, and perplexities of various kinds to mount to his brain and make his head ache.

His brother was with him still—the kind, thoughtful face was bending over him at all hours of the day—the room was better furnished—he was well attended—the doctor's face was new to him—much money had been spent, money of James Bayford's! And that James Bayford had pledged his word to an untruth when he said, his money should not

be offered to him—he was sorry for that. He had spoken falsely to calm his excitement—he had heaped obligations upon the spendthrift and loose-liver, who had only met with his deserts. It troubled him, and he spoke of it the next time his brother sat at the bedside and asked how he felt.

“I should feel better if I were alone here as you found me—if I did not know the debt of obligation under which I am labouring.”

“I am spending your own money.”

“What!”

“Not a farthing of my own, you proud man, who would not receive assistance from the only brother you have! This is your money; legally yours, Robert.”

“I don’t understand.”

“And I don’t think you will for the next month or two,” was the rejoinder; “it’s some conscience-money connected with a roundabout story of our father’s business, which you shall know when you are stronger. You must keep quiet now.”

“I’m a child in your hands. Don’t deceive me.”

Robert Bayford' did not comprehend, but he took his brother's word for it, and it relieved his mind in an extraordinary degree. He looked better from that hour. The spirit of independence was strong in him yet.

Meanwhile, Cissy Daly felt her position particularly embarrassing—a new strange world had risen up around her, and its very goodness made her heart sink. She was desperately unhappy, though she preserved ever the same equable demeanour; she would have given worlds, had she possessed them, to reduce things to the old level—to be living in Lang's Place with *him* before he was struck down by illness; to be starving and struggling with him—he friendless and poor, with only herself to watch him and care for him.

She felt it would all be altered now—that something was to be done for her in a kind and Christian-like manner, that would separate her from the man whom she had learned to love, whom she was willing to die for. More than once she knew the minister and his wife had talked about her, and what was to be done with her in the future; she knew it by

their looks towards her when she came upon them suddenly. They were both kind to her in their way, but she felt aloof from them—something apart by an arm's length of goodness and virtue which she could not resist, which she had not the heart or the courage to bear up against.

The young minister's wife, in particular, was more than courteous; she was kind, and there was so compassionate a look in her eyes when they were bent towards her; she seemed to know all the story, and yet not draw her dress closer to her and shrink away. Strange, very strange, all this, from one of her own sex—the cold repellent virtue of which had ever deterred her from attempting to gain one friend. Weeks ago even the poor landlady of the house sneered at her, and she knew the workman's wife upstairs had been cautioned by her husband to steer clear of her acquaintance.

But this lady, though she embarrassed and pained her, did not treat her as one beneath her; she spoke always as to a friend and sister engaged in one common task that



brought them side by side, and interested them in their work and in each other.

She could have borne a disparaging glance, a harsh comment, better than Mrs. Bayford's invariable kindness.

But she knew a change was coming; that in some way or other there must come a change for Robert Bayford and her. This virtuous man and woman would infallibly step between them and do their best to part them—to break her heart with their pitying kindness and interest. Still, there was a chance for her; Robert Bayford would stand firm. She knew his nature too well to believe that he would coldly consent to cut her adrift; her only fear was, that the minister or his wife, would attempt to persuade *her* to give him up! She would have to strike the blow, unless she stood firm, too, and defied them. After all, what were they to her that she should study them?

Robert grew more strong, strong enough to be talked to and reasoned with. James Bayford very gently, very delicately, began to broach the subject of his brother's future



course of life ; rescued from a dangerous illness, he could not see that brother begin coolly and deliberately the sinful past again. Cissy Daly, jealous and watchful, played the spy as often as she was able. We make no model character of her ; the reader knows how weak and sinful a woman she has been. She had no fine feelings about listening at doors, and her whole soul was in the subject which she was ever striving to overhear.

She became an auditor at last to a dialogue between the brothers. Robert was even then not strong enough to leave his bed, but he had alluded to Cissy as his one friend and inseparable companion, even after his health was restored, and James had felt called upon to speak before his brother hardened too much in his cruel resolution. Cissy had been some minutes away from the sick room ; she knew that the brothers were left together, and she stole cautiously back to the door to hear if they were talking about her. And they were !

“ You think of the old sinful life, Robert,” said James, reproachfully.

“I do not think for an instant of casting her off. She has been true and faithful to me from the day we went away together.”

“If you have confidence in her, marry her. Better that, than living in sin. You love her, or you could part from her.”

Cissy Daly's heart beat very fast; she placed her hands upon her bosom as though to stay its heaving. What would he answer to that? She was not worthy to be his wife—she would never disgrace him by becoming his wife—but what would *he* say?

“She would be miserable to know that I had married her out of charity, or out of gratitude. She said as much once. She's a good girl—let her keep so.”

“She would be happier—you would be so much happier apart, Robert. Lying there, rescued by God's mercy from the jaws of death, don't tell me you are not thankful, that your first act will be the old cruel life of shame?”

“I don't know that I am thankful—I can't say—I don't believe I am. But I am think-

ing of her, faithful to the last ; and God be my judge, I'll not turn her away."

"Then marry her!"

"I have thought of it more than once—but it's a rash venture. I shall do it some day, in a fit of repentance for all my backsliding, perhaps—leave it to me, Jemmy. I was never very hard or unjust."

"But often inconsistent and thoughtless. Inconsistent in your actions, and thoughtless of the road on which they might lead you. Oh! Robert, if you turn away now from the path leading upwards to righteousness, you will never come back. I feel it—I am warned of it."

"I ——"

Cissy Daly heard no more. She felt a light hand press upon her arm, and, turning, she found Dorcas Bayford at her side.

"What are they talking about within there, in which you are so interested?"

"About me!" cried Cissy; "he—he—your husband, is persuading him to cast me off!"

"Persuading him to give up a great sin, as he or I will endeavour to persuade you of the

folly and wickedness of the life you both are thinking of again. My poor girl, you would be happier apart from him."

"Never—never!"

"Happier, knowing God's forgiveness followed your repentance, that there were angels whispering of your better life, and joy in heaven that you were thinking of your Saviour's love again. Happier even knowing that his life was changing also for the better, and that step by step the dark estate was receding to the murky shades that are around us now. You are crying."

"Oh! it is hard—it is hard to talk like that!"

"Come into my room and let us look this hard truth in the face; only by looking at it steadfastly in God's light shall we see the goodness and the brightness of it, Cissy."

Dorcas and Cissy went into a room across the landing, sat down close together by the window looking into the shadowy street below.

"Did Robert Bayford ever speak to you of the life before that one in which you met him,

even of the time when he was a pure-hearted, simple-minded, honest man?"

"Before I met him?—no."

"He was a different man when he was engaged to be married to Amy Saville. Have you heard that name?"

"No."

"Let me tell you his story—what a different man he was—how sin and shame have wrecked one of the noblest natures in the world. You will understand him better then."

Cissy Daly clasped her hands together in her lap, and sat down close to Dorcas's side to hear the story—to gather therefrom the moral which chilled her, and yet which taught her how to act.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE GREAT EFFORT.

DORCAS had been ever a good story-teller. At school she had been the favourite hand at a fairy legend or ghost-story ; in years more mature she had dissipated many a storm shadowed forth by her mother's variable tempers, by an incident well related, that affected Chipnam, and was, therefore, of interest to Mrs. Glade. Her heart was never more in her story than in that of Robert Bayford ; and never in her life had she found a more earnest and absorbed listener.

She told the whole history of Robert Bayford. The love of the brothers for each

other, their parting when Robert went to India, the mother's strange fear that her elder son would not turn out well, and that James might be of help to him some day. She spoke of Robert's early engagement, of the love his great heart was filled with for Amy Saville, of the vows and promises and plighted troth before Amy sailed away from the East. Then the story took a darker hue; became more difficult for one to relate and the other to comprehend. A story of Robert's return, of love misconstrued, of hearts unsettled, of a quarrel and parting, after all the long, long years of faithful service; of the rush to London in that impetuous manner, more characteristic of him then than now; of the bad friends he made, the new life he began, the headlong madman's dash to the ruin which they both sat there that morning gazing at. She painted the picture of Robert as he was once, as he was then, and the vivid colouring blinded Cissy's eyes, and filled them with tears.

“What can I do? What can I do?” she cried, wringing her hands.



“ You can afford him a chance of retrieving his steps—of setting him free from a sin that has enslaved both him and you. Once in the right path, I believe the nobleness inherent in him will lead him upward. I am as confident of that as his brother is. Oh! Miss Daly, you can save him by a sacrifice that is not so hard as you believe !”

“ Could you part from your husband ?—the man you love, Mrs. Bayford ?”

“ For his soul’s sake, readily, willingly.”

“ Ah! you are a good woman—have been always good, and could go back to friends that would love you and welcome you. But I must rush to the streets, or the river.”

“ God forbid ! That can’t be—that shan’t be ! Tell me your story in return, Cissy; tell me about the mother, sisters you had once.”

Cissy burst out crying, but after a while she told her story. We need not recapitulate it; the passing glimpse the reader has caught of it in other pages will suffice for the purposes of this tale. Dorcas learned one

thing : that Cissy's mother was a clergyman's widow, was still living in a cottage in Huntingdonshire, living with a little grandchild of another sister, who had married and died early. Cissy had never entirely lost sight of her mother, it appeared, and Dorcas saw the thread meandering through all the maze of Cissy's darkened life, the faint golden thread which led back to salvation—which was to lead her back in the good time for which James Bayford and his wife were praying.

That husband and wife took counsel together that night concerning Cissy Daly ; the rock was shaken to its base, and the chance of reformation was before them. The better life for her, and the life regenerate for Robert. Late that same evening, Susan Glade, *née* Bayford, arrived with her husband, Josiah, to offer their aid and counsel in the good work to which all desired to lend a hand.

But James Bayford and Dorcas would have no further assistance ; and Josiah Glade, who had prepared quite a sermon on the evils of temptation, and the sin of leading good men half-price into the galleries of theatres, was

compelled to confess that, perhaps, it was better he should not interfere. James had to break the news of his sister's arrival to Robert, who did not appear so displeased to hear of her anxiety to see him as James had anticipated.

"She won't lecture me, Jemmy," he said, with a rueful look.

"Not she."

"She was always grave and severe, and I can't stand it. No poor sinner was ever worried into a Christian yet."

"She only wishes to see you. In her heart, I believe, Bob, you have always been the favourite brother."

"I don't believe that."

Favourite brother or not, she began to cry hysterically at the sight of him, and the change in him, and was dragged away by James Bayford before her excitement spread to the invalid, over whom she had begun to weep and wring her hands.

So the time went on; November was drawing to a close; people were thinking about Christmas; a little grocer at the corner of

Lang's Place had started a pudding-club, and put a coloured woodcut in his window, that even tempted the most dyspeptic in the neighbourhood to enter their names as subscribers. Cissy was still nurse to Robert Bayford, still struggling with good and tempted by her woman's love, which we will call evil, for the sake of argument—for such love as hers was very hard to define just then. To Susan Glade she had not taken as readily as to the minister's wife ; she was kind in her way too, but it was a cold and distant kindness, that reminded her more often how low she had fallen. Cissy was full of thought, and it wore her out and rendered her impatient and fretful. The way was not clear before her—beyond there, in the distance, all was impenetrable. Robert was irritable and impatient, too, at times, and that helped to try her more than all.

At this period Josiah Glade had an interview with his sister Dorcas, and started suddenly on a strange mission, to be dwelt upon more fully ere this chapter ends.

Cissy did not notice his departure—had

“Don't find fault with them—they mean well.”

“I know it.”

“You and I, girl, may not understand them, but—one of them at least, God bless him—is as near perfect goodness as most men. Had I followed his simple counsel, what a different man I might have been!”

“Don't look so mournfully at me, for God's sake!” cried the woman.

“I was not thinking of you, my poor girl.”

He drew his hand from hers, and rested it on her head, which had buried itself in the bed-clothes. When she looked up again, she was very white and haggard.

“If I have not given you good advice, but led you on downwards, ever downwards, will you forgive me now? I am so sorry!”

“It can't be helped, Ciss. You and I were not made of the moral stuff that wears well.”

“Had I known all, I would not have sought to entice you away at first. When I began to love you, I knew how wrong I was, and all the harm I was doing; and yet I was

a worse woman before I knew you than afterwards. Isn't that odd?"

"Perhaps so."

"Those who have been led away, think they have a right to lead others astray in their turn. I was successful! Say you forgive me?"

"You have been true to me. Why do you harp upon my forgiveness? Haven't I a right to ask yours?"

"It's a whim of mine—just say so."

She was so earnest, that he muttered his forgiveness to stay her importunity.

"I can't stand too much of this, Ciss," he ventured to remonstrate, "I'm not strong enough."

"I'm a brute—I'm always forgetful. God bless you, and make a good man of you yet, Robert Bayford!"

Those were the last words that he ever heard escape her lips.

She went out of the room immediately afterwards, and met Dorcas Bayford with two letters in her hand—one open, one sealed.

"This," holding the open letter towards

Cissy, "is from my brother Josiah, who went to Huntingdon yesterday. He finds your mother very old, feeble, and lonely, anxious to forgive the past, and hold her daughter to her heart again. The mother writes this note to you."

The sealed letter trembled in the hand that took it from the speaker.

"You are very—very kind to me," murmured Cissy; "the way you spoke of is very plain and straight before me now. I have no excuse to stay."

"Excuse!" was the half-reproachful answer.

"Pardon me—the right word I am no more used to than the right path."

She opened the letter which had been given to her, and began to peruse its contents very eagerly. Suddenly she crumpled it together in her hands, crying, "I'll go—I'll go—I'll go!"

Dorcas Bayford could not bid her stay—her duty to her neighbours and her God deterred her, though her heart was wrung by the weak woman's distress.

“I shall be happier away—and he will be very, very happy in good time. I will wait till he is asleep before I look at him once more. I can’t face him; I could not tell him I was going. You must break that to him in your own way—you who understand him so much better than I!”

It was a slight dash of bitterness, for which she asked pardon the instant afterwards; her mind was made up, but her brain was whirling with the very force of the one good resolution she had formed.

Later that day, when the afternoon sun was streaming into the room, and Robert Bayford was asleep, the woman with the one good resolution entered cautiously. She wore her dark bonnet and shawl, and looked more white and haggard by contrast than ever.

James Bayford gave a warning “Hush” as she entered the room. He was sitting at the bed’s foot, with an open Bible on his knees.

“He’s asleep,” the minister whispered.

“I will not wake him, sir.”

She went very silently, very timidly to the bedside, and looked down upon the sleeper.



He seemed brighter and better than she had seen him for many a day; had the old friends round him made his heart more light, despite the misanthropy he had assumed before their advent?

“I have been talking to your wife, sir. I have made up my mind to—to go away!”

“It is best.”

“I am trying to believe it!”

“When do you leave us, Miss Daly?”

“Now—at once. I bade *him* good-bye an hour ago.”

“Is he not aware that you are going?”

“No—better as it is. There is one thing I hope you will tell him, sir?”

“You may rely upon me.”

“Don’t let him believe that I have left here for any reason, save his own good. Oh! sir, not that I had grown tired of him; because he was poor and ill, and it had become my place to work for *him*. Some day, you will tell him the whole truth?”

“I will.”

“Then—then I’ll go now!”

She approached still nearer the bedside,

looking wistfully—oh! so wistfully—at the man with whom her life had been connected. She knew that she should never see him again from that hour; each struggling to live better, purer lives, must proceed upon divergent roads, and never cross each other's path again.

A strange life together theirs had been—seeing many changes, experiencing much change themselves—begun in affluence, closing in that poverty-haunted chamber, where she stood then to say “good-bye.” Once the impulse came over her to wake him, but she remembered in time that he was ill and weak, and that the excitement of the parting might prove too much for him. She stooped down and kissed him on the forehead; he turned restlessly and murmured something in a low tone.

“Did you hear that?” she asked.

“No,” replied the minister, who was watching her intently.

“He said ‘Amy.’ In all my life I have never heard him whisper that name. It is you and yours coming back to him, that bring her to his thoughts again.”

“Is that a reproach?”

“No—never mind,” she said, hurriedly; “it was a jealous pang, and I am a poor weak woman. God bless you, Robert Bayford! You made my life a happy one at least.”

“Hush—hush!—don’t say that now. Cast the sin away from you boldly, woman. God will strengthen you in time.”

“I hope so.”

“Have you any money? Will you allow me to——”

“My mother sent me money in her letter—my mother, who will forgive everything and take me in her arms again. Oh! to die there the first time they press me to her heart.”

“Courage, my poor girl, courage!”

“I—I am really going now.”

“Good-bye. Pray night and day for strength—for forgiveness. On the right path your trials and temptations will grow less each day. Good-bye.”

He stretched forth his hand, and she placed hers within it. He murmured something like a prayer over her, as he might have done over

a child going a long journey with a faint heart and little faith, but she did not heed him. She was still looking at the sleeper, dreaming not of separation.

So the curtain fell between Robert Bayford and Cissy Daly ; and two poor sinners began their lives afresh from that day.

END OF BOOK V.



BOOK VI.

“SETTLING DOWN.”



## CHAPTER I.

## THE OLD HOME.

WHETHER the Reverend James Bayford acted wisely in taking his brother Robert to the old cottage on the Chipnam road, is a matter of some doubt. He was a man who had great faith in human nature, and was above all those petty suspicions which keep dispositions a little less elevated than his own continually in hot water. He knew that Amy Saville, "the old love," was formally engaged to Frederick Alland, and an engagement was as sacred a thing in his eyes as a marriage. The old follies, whims, love-troubles had evaporated into thin air; Amy was to be married



early in the spring—there was perfect confidence between her and her betrothed.

So there being nothing to fear, he brought his brother Robert down to Chipnam. If that brother were to be his companion for some months, perhaps for life, the sooner he took his place in the midst of the old faces, and became used to them again, the better. They must be continually crossing his path, and he had faith in Robert's self-command—and a greater belief in Robert's having outlived the sentimentalism of that early period wherein he had not acted for the best. Besides, necessity compelled him to see after his flock once more ; and Robert was to be one of his flock now, to be tended and cared for as a little child, till he grew strong again. Robert was still very weak and ill, and need not distress himself about an old sweetheart or a new one yet awhile. Robert Bayford had undergone a deal of persuasion to be induced to visit Chipnam, but his brother had him all to himself, and Robert's disposition was not of a stubbornness that could long resist an attack. He was unsettled and weak ; the story of

Cissy Daly's departure had been related by his brother James, and the history had touched him more than he had cared to own. She had made one struggle at repentance, believing that he would follow if she took the first step ; for both their sakes she had severed the tie which had linked them together ; she had left him free and in good hands. And Robert had been very ill, had found time for graver thought on that sick-bed from which it seemed he should never escape ; his brother's love, and kindness, and interest in his welfare had aroused his gratitude, and led him at last to consent to accompany him home.

“You will never make a saint of me, Jemmy,” he had said, “but I will do my best to follow your behests. I'm stranded on the sea-shore, without an object in life, or the strength to follow one if I had ; take care of me as a little child, till little children of your own come to bless your marriage.”

It was a long while before he could thoroughly understand how his brother had kept his word about spending no money upon him ; he had not anticipated finding the Glades

mixed up with the story as well as the Allands. The story of the Glade family struggling for many years to save two thousand pounds interested him in that family more than he had ever believed possible; his dislike to Josiah Glade, the man of energy and contradiction, began to vanish rapidly away. For young Glade's honesty of purpose he could forgive his eccentricity; he was sorry he had pained him so much on the night they had met by chance in the roadway before Northumberland House. When they met again, he was assured that they would be better friends.

There was a long discussion about the money that had been paid over very formally, and with some degree of pride, by the Glades, father and son, before James Bayford's marriage. James was anxious to prove that Robert, as elder son, was entitled to all the money. Robert had no small reluctance to accept one half as his share.

"That's not all the conscience money that has been paid into the Bayford exchequer lately," said James. "My friend Alland—"

“Your friend?”

“Yes, and a valued friend too, as I shall be able to explain some day. He heard the story from the senior Glade—the whole story of his father’s duplicity—and insisted upon paying me the same amount as the Glades. With that money I sought out the representatives of my father’s creditors, and paid all those old debts which bore my father to the grave, and turned our mother’s hair grey. Here are your thousand pounds, minus the expenses of your illness in Lang’s Place, I am sorry to say.”

“Money enough to begin the world afresh when my strength comes back, Jemmy.”

“In what manner?”

“I thought of the manner all last night.”

“And did not sleep a wink in consequence. I’ll have no bad nights yet awhile, Bob.”

“And the manner is to get my strength up here in the Chipnam Hills, and then take my little fortune to India once more.”

“Don’t be in too great a hurry to shake us off, Robert.”

“I can stand this place so long as I’m

helpless, or require a stick to lean upon; if I ever return to my old self, I must show my gratitude by giving you the slip."

"Not without fair warning, Robert."

"Well—perhaps not."

He did not speak of Cissy Daly for a long while to his brother, or his brother's wife, but he thought of her. She troubled him. He did not feel that he had acted well towards her—his scrupulous sense of honour, that had never left him in his poverty and distress, resented the method of the disruption; he had a morbid feeling that he had acted cruelly; that by his silence she might torture herself into believing that he was happy at the disruption, and cared not for her feelings in the matter.

And though he did care for her feelings, and prayed that she was resigned to the irrevocable step she had taken, in his heart he was glad the separation had taken place. Truly grateful as he was for her long watch over him, for her long love of him, his passion had been at first an excitement, later an effort by way of return for her faithful ser-

vices, never anything deeper or more lasting. Still he was vexed with himself that he did not miss her more ; vexed that he could not learn if she were happy or content. He would have given worlds to know if she were as content as he—if following the path of rectitude, she had, like himself, found a heart more light. If he had hated Cissy Daly in lieu of entertaining that feeble kind of affection engendered by the evidence of her passion for him, he could not have helped feeling strangely anxious to know of her present happiness.

A letter came at last to Mrs. James Bayford, which threw a light upon her history. She had promised to write, and had kept her word. Mrs. Bayford did not show the letter to her brother-in-law, for, almost unknown to the writer, there was an under-current of wild love still evident, and Robert Bayford might perceive it. In the midst of her protestations of contentment at her mother's side, she inquired too anxiously concerning Robert, hoped too frequently that he was well and happy—desired with too much earnestness the hope

that he had wholly forgotten one so utterly unworthy of him. She was content—her mother was more kind to her than she could have foreseen—God be thanked, she had won back all the old love which she thought had been forfeited by her erring steps! Robert Bayford drew a deep breath of relief when Dorcas told him of Cissy Daly's happiness—the disruption of the past guilty union, he need not regret now; it was a wild dream of passion, from which both had awakened.

Robert Bayford changed rapidly for the better. With a mind more at ease, he became more like the Robert Bayford whom we remember first coming to Chipnam with a hopeful heart. True, he was never the same man—not quite two years had passed since then, but he looked close on forty years of age, and there were deep furrows across his broad forehead, which care rather than time had set there. He retained, too, his beard and moustache, much to the horror of the good Chipnam folk, amongst whom hirsute decorations had never become fashionable.

One would think that the Reverend James

Bayford should have been satisfied with his brother's improvement, and not expected too much of him all at once; but though he uttered no protest, there was still a something in Robert which did not quite satisfy the younger brother. In the eyes of the minister, Robert's manner was scarcely natural; he had improved, but there was ever an effort evident to drop into the brother's ways, ever a thought or two foreign to the discourse of the hour, crossing and saddening the manly face before him. This only in the minister's opinion; Dorcas saw greater improvement, and hoped for greater still, as the strength natural to the man came slowly back.

And Robert hoped so also. He tried very hard to be again the same brother they had known and loved once; but the effort was a little too apparent, and he was vexed at his poor histrionic attempts.

"I should have known there is no going back to the old character, any more than to the old life and the thoughts which belonged to it," he murmured one day, a little peevishly; "for Jemmy's sake I have been



playing the actor, and playing it badly. I have passed through a furnace, and been hardened—let me set aside any attempt to be brighter and more cheerful than I am.”

Robert Bayford became more natural after that; if he were inclined to deep thought, he took a turn on the lawn for an hour or two together, with his hands behind him, clutching his elbows after the old fashion. If he were tired of his brother's company, of the one theme of religion, which at least never tired the good man, he would make no effort to bear with it, but take the stick on which he was still forced to lean, and go for a long stroll on the high road or amongst the Chipnam hills. We have said that there was a load off his heart, but still the burden was not all gone; from such a man, slowly awakening again to life's responsibilities, it was not to be expected. There was a great change, but James Bayford instinctively compared him with the brother he had known in the early days, rather than with him he had rescued in Lang's Place, and his sanguine spirit was not wholly satisfied.

On the high road, or amongst the Chipnam hills, he met with the old faces, one by one—the face that had been dearest to him last of all. One of the first persons to encounter was a man to whom he had not addressed a dozen words—the man whose troubled conscience had been hidden by a Brummagem philosophy—the senior Glade. Now there was nothing to trouble his mind, Mr. Glade was more serious. When he had been most frivolous, or most satirical, the dark under-current had been the most disturbed.

“Good morning, Mr. Bayford,” he said, with a nervous shyness very new to him, “my name is Glade, sir; may I offer you my hand?”

“It is the hand of an honest man—of one in a thousand,” said Robert.

“You are turning your back on Vale Street Chapel this morning, sir.”

“My brother will forgive me. There are times, with me, when it is impossible to sit still and listen to good words.”

This first dialogue occurred on a Sunday

morning, three weeks or a month after Robert's return to Chipnam.

"I wasn't much of a chapel-goer myself once—in fact, I am afraid used to worry poor Josiah by running down the pastor of Vale Street. All a disguise, sir, to hide the old trouble. I could not go to Vale Street, your brother looked so very much like the man I had wronged—and the only time I strayed into Chipnam Church, Frederick Alland preached on hypocrisy and deceit, and made me miserable for a week. But it's all over now. There's a load off my mind, and I go to Vale Street Chapel whenever my wife permits me."

"Permits you?"

"Sometimes she insists upon attending Chipnam Church, her son-in-law having hurt her feelings during the week; she is not particular from what fount she draws her religious consolation. And—ahem! I don't aggravate her so much as I used, poor old lady. She's certainly not so peevish as she used to be with me; she's getting old and feeble; and now we have only ourselves to study, I'm not half so

often inclined to aggravate her. I think we have all changed with the parish."

"Has that changed?"

"Wonderfully!—thanks to the better feeling between Mr. Alland and your brother. They have discovered the way of living without deluging their parishioners with too much boiling-water. Lord bless you, Mr Bayford, you'll see a dissenting family taking tea with a churchman's now!"

"That was a remarkable sight once, then?"

"Ah! in Chipnam. But somehow we have all fallen into a better track. I shall never forget the excitement of the people at poor Mr. Chark's funeral, when Mr. Alland and your brother followed side by side as mourners."

"Chark ——— dead!"

Robert Bayford had been three weeks in Chipnam without making that discovery. They had not spoken to him of the old protector of Amy Saville, and he had imagined life still steadily going on unchanged at the villa on the heights.

“What has become of Miss Saville, then?” he said, suddenly.

“She lives in the same villa until Mr. Alland takes her to his own in the coming spring. It must be very dull up there for her.”

“Yes.”

Robert Bayford put no more questions to Mr. Glade, and the old gentleman shook hands with him, and went on to Vale Street Chapel, the single bell of which was still summoning the congregation. He went on up the Chipnam hills that day, and tired himself to death in his attempt to reach the tableland, and rested so long thereon, when the ascent was gained, that the dinner and even the tea hour passed by before he made his appearance in the cottage.

A meeting with Frederick Alland on the following day ensued. More than once the meeting might have occurred before, but Robert had eluded it. He bore the man no malice now; he judged him more fairly, from much that his brother James had said lately, but there was still a wish to avoid him.

He brought with him so sad a train of recollection, and Robert was building on the future, and endeavouring to live down the past by every means in his power. Was not the past full of phantoms that had deceived him, and led him astray,—why should he seek this man, who brought them all so vividly before him?

But Mr. Alland had caught sight of him, and was not to be eluded that particular evening. He was aware that Robert was in Chipnam, though he had paid no formal visit at his brother's house. He trusted to a chance meeting as more natural, as more likely to effect the object which he had in view, of becoming his friend, adviser, even at the last. He had a strange idea that he understood Robert Bayford's character better than his brother did; that if he could once gain his confidence, he could work a change in him. Long ago, he had taken one of those strange fancies to him, which women more often take for each other, and he had expressed himself truly when he told Robert one day that "there was no man's affection he coveted so highly."

Frederick Alland had been alone in the world all his life, and this man he could have loved—could love still—as a brother.

Alland met him on the road near James Bayford's house, and held his hand towards him as to an old friend. He would not think of their last meeting, and of Robert's angry words—he was a man who bore no hatred in his heart. Robert had almost forgotten their last quarrel, if quarrel it could be called. In the vortex into which he had plunged after that evening, he had had no time to think of it. Now at least his mind was calm, and he could reflect more justly; he felt assured that he had wronged the man.

“I am glad to see you back in Chipnam, Mr. Bayford.”

“Thank you.”

“I am going your way——” he had overtaken Robert, who had not the power yet to attempt to outwalk him; “you must let me accompany you.”

Seeing Robert hesitate, he said very quickly:

“I hope you and I have no harsh recollections of each other now; that at least we can

afford to set aside, even to smile at, our over-hasty tempers."

He took his share of blame, to render Robert's position less embarrassing.

"We need not go back to the past, Mr. Alland," said Robert, a little gloomily; "I was a madman and a fool—pray, forget all that."

"There is nothing I am more anxious to do. When will you come to my villa, and have a long talk with me? I have so much to tell you."

"I am scarcely strong enough to pay visits yet."

"Amy and I were only talking of you yesterday," said he.

Frederick Alland was evidently anxious to introduce the name of his betrothed into the discourse; he would have no forbidden topic between them; no subject which neither dared to approach. Amy was to be his wife, and he was a man who placed full confidence in her—the old engagement was dead and buried, and there need be no mystery concerning it.

It would place Robert more at his ease if



he spoke of Amy Saville ; if she flitted across the subject of their conversation as a figure impossible, under the circumstances, to be kept eternally in the background. He would like Robert Bayford to see her very often—to become her friend again. Nothing, he thought, would more quickly make Robert friends with him. Bayford had long ago sunk all thoughts of her to whom he had been engaged ; if he saw her and Alland together it would dispel all restraint, and each would take his and her place in due order, and without embarrassment. Everything was fair-sailing now—the storm was of last year's date, and the waters were flowing peacefully on ; why begin by an awkward restraint, as if there were names over which hung an interdict, and faces that must of necessity, to spare some foolish or morbid feeling, be ever under a veil ?

So, in a straightforward, unaffected manner, he spoke of Amy Saville ; and he who knew how unworthy he was of her, thanked him in his heart for his frankness. It tinged his cheeks for the first few moments, and then he recovered his equanimity, and thought

how much better a plan it was, than to be continually dodging a topic in which both must be interested. Alland spoke of Mr. Chark—of the efforts that good man had made to bring about a better understanding between him and James Bayford; of the wish that he should marry Amy, when she had recovered her sorrow at the loss of so old and valued a friend. He spoke of their approaching marriage in the spring time, without any exultation that might pain his auditor; and Robert, led away by the speaker's frankness, wished him every happiness in the new life that was in store for him.

“It's an odd subject for you and me to grow eloquent upon,” he said, still more frankly; “but you are right in bringing it to the surface, and making one used to the changes that have occurred since I was here last.”

“You must see Amy shortly.”

“Are you not afraid of so formidable a rival—a man prematurely old, who requires a stick to hobble along the high-road with?”

Robert said it without any bitterness. The

conversation between Alland and him had lightened his spirits considerably.

“There will never again be rivalry between us, Bayford.”

“It’s not very likely,” said Robert, shrugging his shoulders at the assertion.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE MEETING.

THE town of Chipnam had certainly altered for the better since the days of Mr. Chark. Mr. Chark had done more good on his dying-bed for the town, than all his long life of preaching had effected. He had sat down before him two men of great energy, and some little obduracy, and brought them by degrees to a right understanding and appreciation of each other; he had touched them by his earnestness; finally, he had made them friends.

And these two men having become friends, worked together for good, as Mr. Chark had

prophesied. They had their characteristic manners of preaching still: one still thought as highly of the church as the other did of dissent, but they worked silently, energetically together, and thought less of their own tenets than of the broad field before them, wherein lay honest work for both.

When James Bayford and Frederick Alland walked arm-in-arm up the High Street for the first time in their lives, there was as much excitement in the town as if they had marched at the head of a regiment of the Chipnam volunteers. Chipnam could not understand the alliance, or believe its own eyes. That part of Chipnam, on speaking terms with the two lights of the town, even insisted on an explanation; and obtained it, and went away puzzled at the broad views suddenly elucidated, and doubtful if it were quite right.

Church and chapel working together for good! There was something radically wrong somewhere, and Chipnam would awake to the reality after the wonder had run its allotted course of nine days. It woke to the reality,

very speedily, of a better state of things ; of less rancour at tea-tables and private parties. From the pulpits of both church and chapel a new principle was suddenly propounded—that there were various ways of doing good, of living a chaste and exemplary life. Mr. James Bayford, as was natural, was more outspoken than the rector ; he told the whole story of Mr. Chark's death to his hearers, and how standing thereat he and another of God's servants learned a lesson never to be forgotten in their after-lives. The feud between church and chapel folk waxed low ; human nature is wondrously imitative ; the churchwarden of St. Martin's and one of the elders of Vale Street went out fishing together in amicable conjunction, on the very same day that their wives went shopping. At the sick beds of the poor and ailing, the dissenter or the churchman might stand, it mattered little which ; in the town-hall of Chipnam, during the winter months, began anew those very lectures which had been so signal a failure once, and which proved this time to be one of the greatest successes of which the town

had ever to boast. The new incumbent in Mr. Chark's place was a man after Mr. Chark's own heart; a man without pride, who wore no cloak of sectarian prejudice in which he might enwrap himself when a different creed to his own came between the wind and his divinity. He put his shoulder to the wheel in earnest with the rest, and much of ill-feeling, want of kindness—sour-tempered bigotry, that had no charity—vain-glory, that knew no virtues beyond the ken of its own Pharisaicalness, went the way of all stumbling-blocks in the path that led to heaven. Chipnam became a model town; we dwell upon it here for the benefit of those churchmen or dissenters who may abide in towns of a similar description, and are blessed with an influence over its inhabitants. It is possible—just possible—that from the height of that pulpit in the middle aisle the churchman may have inveighed a little too forcibly and uncharitably against the sect at the corner of the street; just as the dissenter may have worked himself into a passion against the form and ceremony and written prayers of

those who have been church-goers all their lives. Possible that one flock remains to this day strangely in doubt as to the moral standing, the future fate of the other flock, holding itself aloof, and passing by on the other side. Shake hands, men of God, and turn your one effort to chasing the wolf—which is the devil—from the fold you keep restless by eternal bickering against each other. Try the experiment just for awhile, in the towns and villages over which your jurisdiction extends, and see how much more happiness and peace of mind fall to your own share as well as the congregation's.

We are told that this is an age that advances. We are staunch believers in the faith that religion advances also, stands less upon ceremony, would save a soul in the street as cheerfully as in a pew for which five guineas per annum are paid. A religion that is less narrow and straightlaced, and will lead sinners to repentance, without studying too much the means to the end. There are friendships springing up between good men both of church and chapel, in many



a spot of our native land, where a war about a text has set men's hearts in opposition. We do not believe that Frederick Alland and James Bayford are the only two men of different sects who have cried, "Peace between us, brother. Apart, we have done harm in our way, and separated God's people. Together, we are at the head of an army, whose power and strength there is no calculating. SECT IS NOTHING!"

Alland thought no worse of Robert Bayford because he never made his appearance at St. Martin's now. Robert preferred his brother's sermons—they were doing him good, teaching him resignation, affording him strength. James Bayford never preached better than for the little while his brother sat under him. He did not commit the folly and weakness of preaching at him—he chose his sermons for the whole of his congregation, but there were many truths that struck home to Robert who had repented of his wilfulness and stubbornness, and come back to Chipnam a changed man.

Nevertheless, time at Chipnam hung heavily

on the hands of Robert Bayford. He was an objectless man still—that strength which was to take him to India was a long while in coming back. There was nothing to do but wander about the hills and valleys, and speculate as to his future—what it would be like, whether he would always be alone in it, without one whom he could trust and love? Were fortunes after all so easily made, that he could be sure of going to India and, a second time, amassing riches to himself? He was very doubtful of that, although with every day his anxiety to leave his native land was on the increase. His heart, despite all his efforts, was a heavy one yet; for the past he was sorry and ashamed, but in the present there was little lightness or brightness. If the old strength would only return; not the hopes and wishes of the past, only the strength that was with him in those days that had vanished away!

In our last chapter we spoke of Robert meeting Amy Saville at last. Full a month of Robert's stay at Chipnam before the old lovers met. Robert had a good memory, and

remembering her old favourite walks, had avoided them; Amy Saville was more fond than ever of that solitary villa, which she still retained as her home—clung to as a remnant of the times dear to her by many fond associations.

Robert was crossing the churchyard of St. Edward's when he encountered Amy Saville for the first time. She was advancing along the path towards the little wicket at the end, and it was impossible to escape her. After all, where was the necessity of flying from her?—was it not cowardice in him?

He must have greatly changed, or his beard have made a vast difference in his general appearance, for the first instant she did not recognize him. The deep tones of his voice addressing her brought the colour to her face, and the look of recognition thereon.

“Miss Saville, may an old friend take the liberty of hoping you are well?”

“Mr. Bayford!”

They shook hands together, both somewhat timidly in the first instance. The shadow of their old alienation would fall between them,

till each gathered courage, remembered the present and their duties in it.

“You have had a long illness, Mr. Alland tells me?”

“Yes, Miss Saville—a long and tedious one, for I am anxious to be away again, seeking for a little of that money which I threw away once very foolishly and wilfully.”

“You think of returning to India?”

“I have spent my happiest days there. It will be like going home.”

He did not know, until he saw the colour mounting to her face, that he had pained her. He did not know all that he had implied until the warning was before him.

“I beg your pardon—I had forgotten,” he said in great haste.

Amy had soon recovered herself. She knew he had not uttered a word designedly, and she only blamed her own weakness that had shown her heart was not steeled to all past associations. But she had been surprised at meeting him so suddenly, and the change in Robert was so great, considering the little while since she had seen him last.

“You were a younger man in India, Mr. Bayford. As you grow older you cannot expect to become more happy.”

“Certainly not,” he said, with his old readiness of reply.

He shook off all embarrassment at once. He remembered Frederick Alland; he knew the fair young face before him would soon blush at Alland’s bridal vows; he saw no reason after all why she and he should not be friends—common-place, matter-of-fact friends. To be constantly meeting, blushing, and stammering would be a folly on both sides, unworthy of a man and woman looking soberly at life.

So he spoke steadily and frankly, and his great brown eyes flinched not when she looked at him.

“You have lost a dear old friend—a second father—since we last met,” he said.

“An irreparable loss, sir.”

“You must have felt it acutely. Will you go back with me as far as his grave, Miss Saville?”

It was a request that startled her. He was

looking at her very sadly, very thoughtfully, as he spoke, but he did not avert his gaze when she looked nervously up into his face. They went back together and stood side by side at the grave of an old friend.

“Will you tell Mr. Alland, when you see him, that before the grave of him who wished well to us both, I have asked your pardon for all past offences, and prayed for your lasting happiness with him who will shortly call you wife. Sinking the bygones here for ever, and not leaving one foolish thought alive, will you consider me for a little while the old father’s friend you trusted once?”

“Yes,” was the frank reply.

“I shall not stay here till your marriage,” he said; “only for a little while, till my feet do not falter as I leave here for ever. I ask your consent, because I am not the Robert Bayford you have known; because I have changed and wandered from the right path, and am wholly unworthy of your friendship.”

“You have repented.”

“I am sorry for the past. And—and I do not wish to go away an utter stranger to you

all. We can all be friends now without fear of misconstruction, Mr. Alland tells me; surely he is right."

"Surely."

He shook hands with her, and they parted the instant afterwards. The meeting had taken place, and his heart was lighter now. He could look into her face, hear her voice without an impatient throb at his heart; he was glad that she was going to marry Alland, a good and an affectionate man, who would value the prize that had fallen to his share. He was very glad they were all going to be friends again, for the little while longer that he should trouble his native land.

He was not aware that he had forgotten to use his stick, and was walking along the high road at a pace he had not adopted for a year at least, until Frederick Alland caught him by the arm.

"Good morning, Bayford. You are in a hurry this morning, and are marching along like a life-guardsman."

"Was I? Then I was overheating myself, and must thank you for stopping me in mid-

career, and saving me doctor's bill No. 3. I have seen Miss Saville this morning."

"I am glad to hear it. Where did you meet her?"

"Near poor Chark's grave. I asked her pardon for all the past wherein I had pained her; she will tell you, too, that I solicited for the next few weeks to assume my part of friend again."

"Guardian, if you will; anything, of course, but the old love," said Alland, with a laugh.

Bayford laughed at the remark too. The minister's confidence in him was pleasant to witness.

"And jesting apart, Bayford, I am glad that you have met her. I had a vague suspicion that you were afraid, for my sake, to look at her again—afraid of your own powers of self-command, or of the feelings I might entertain with regard to the meeting."

"You see, you are wrong."

"I have promised to spend an evening with your brother next week; I shall bring Amy with me. She is very dull at the villa there."



“Why don't you marry her at once?”

“She insists on a clear year—on not becoming my wife till the spring. I can do no less than bow to her decision.”

“I wished you and her every happiness in your married estate to-day. You see, I have had a long conversation with Miss Saville.”

“The longer the better,” said Alland, cheerfully; “I shall never be jealous, understand. Single or married, there will be always perfect confidence between Amy and me.”

He held up his head very proudly as he spoke—there was a tinge of the old hauteur that Robert had missed in him since the renewal of their acquaintance. Still it was a pardonable pride; he was proud of the girl who was to be his wife—to be considered jealous of her, was to imply that he distrusted the depth of her affection for him. Before their engagement, Amy had told Alland of her past love for Robert Bayford, but it did not suggest itself to him then. The engagement had begun, all past loves had gone down into the deep sea, and he did not care

to look after them. Sunk to the bottom he was assured they were; therefore they did not disturb him. His engagement to Amy was a new life, wherein the grace and goodness of his character more fully developed themselves; a new life to Amy also, wherein there was not one sorrowful look back at the landscape whereon other figures had wandered. He believed all this—he implied all this, when he held his head high and talked of perfect confidence.

Robert Bayford observed him narrowly, and felt for a moment a slight pang, as if of envy, at the other's exultant happiness. His own day was gone, and that man's—once his rival's—had come. Remarking Alland's health and strength, with the bright future stretching beyond him in the sunshine, Robert could but feel himself a more miserable and disappointed man. Alland was all life and hope, and *he* had not a purpose in the world that could lead to happiness. Alland would have a wife and children round him in good time, and be respected of all men; he should be ever alone, thinking of the foolish

wicked past, that would be a shameful retrospect, impossible to forget.

Alland observed the shadow flit across his companion's face, and was quick with his consolation.

"Your turn will come some day, Bayford. You're a young man still, with hosts of fair girls to meet in the world and choose one for a wife. Something tells me you will be a very happy man yet."

"Well, I mean to try."

He left the rector with a laugh, and went on down the road and past the rector's villa, at a pace that would increase despite of him. The smiling face vanished as he hastened on; he felt that a set hard expression was predominant, and could not be dissipated. The shadow of Frederick Alland's happiness would haunt his steps that day. Suddenly Robert Bayford gave quite a melodramatic start and paused; he had come upon Saville House without thinking of it—the old, old place, from which he might date the first plunge into the deep waters of sin. What a strange place it seemed to him, standing there

in the sunshine like a monument to his past infamy! A house begun in hope, and with such ardent thoughts; finished as if in defiance of the love that had been uprooted in a night. How long he remained there pondering he never knew; he thought of so much, that a different walk would have spared him. Figures marched by him that he had forgotten; faces that had become strange to him crowded round him once again. All the frivolous, heartless friends he had brought together in that house were before him; he could have called each one by name. Cissy Daly was there too; young, handsome and bold; eager to entrap him in the mesh of her fascinations—now the spell that bound her to Vaughan had been broken abruptly. The same woman who *had* entrapped him, whose character commingling with his own—even in its wreck a noble one—had softened, exhibited fairer traits of womanhood, flowered into a love for him that lasted through misfortune almost to death; the woman whose parting from him was for his sake, not her own, and therefore verged on the heroic. What a medley of life

in that house—what a mockery of all that was honest and true—what an awful contrast with the love that laid the first stone, and the despair that saw the last workman out of the house!

The mansion was inhabited; the first check to his thoughts was given by the door opening, and a nursemaid coming forth with a little child. He could see the mother—young and gentle-looking—at the drawing-room window, watching the tottering steps of her first-born.

All this a home-picture, to which he might have laid claim had he not been a fool—had he but possessed a little more patience, and not jumped too hastily at conclusions. And yet *she* had never loved him after her return from India; so better—far better—after all, as it was.

Better to be standing alone in the highway, than the lord of a fair mansion, with a wife whose heart was estranged from him. She had paused at the right moment, and saved herself; it *was* as well!

“You are thinking too deeply here, brother

Robert," said a voice, suddenly, behind ; " I shan't let you go, till I see you safe home."

" Only a brown study, Glade."

Josiah Glade passed his arm through his brother-in-law's, saying,—

" I have private instructions from James to disturb any reverie of yours I may come across—to do my best to keep you cheerful and content. So I shan't leave you—you are in safe hands—there is no escaping a man and running into playhouse galleries here !"

Robert laughed and went away arm-in-arm with him.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE OLD COMPLAINT.

ROBERT BAYFORD became perfectly convinced that his heart was lighter—that he was returning, more rapidly than he had imagined possible, to his old self. He was friends with the whole world ; there was nothing to harass or embarrass him ; he felt inclined to stay in Chipnam till Amy Saville was married, and give her away—taking the post of guardian as if it were his right.

For, setting love troubles aside, Amy and he had always been the best of friends ; before he was engaged to her, she was a little girl he had nursed in his arms, bought play-

things for, taken for a ride in his chaise. Next to her own father, she had loved him when she was a child ; they had been inseparables until she went from India a shy, pretty girl of sixteen, promising—ah ! no more of that, that was the shady side of the story, and he need not turn to it now.

He met Amy once more before that evening to which Mr. Alland had alluded. They were both unembarrassed this time ; when he asked her if she were coming with Mr. Alland on the following Tuesday, she said, “ Yes ;” and they parted politely and genially, like old friends who understood each other. It was surprising how comfortable he felt after that meeting ; how much more like a man with a will to go to India and make money there. He felt like Amy’s guardian, or Amy’s uncle or brother, after that ; the morbid regrets which had driven him wild he could scarcely account for. What a long while it would be till Tuesday came round and brought Amy and her lover to his brother’s house !

He was anxious to prove to Amy, to Alland,



to all whom it might interest, that the first romance was over, and that, in the sober reality of every-day life, he could be strong yet, and evince no signs of disappointment.

On the Tuesday morning, James Bayford drew his brother into the garden, and walked with him on the grass-plot.

“I think I told you, Robert, that Mr. Alland talked of visiting us to-night—Mr. Alland, Susan, and Susan’s husband.”

“You mentioned it in the beginning of the week.”

“Mr. Alland told me yesterday that he should take the liberty of bringing Miss Saville with him, Robert.”

“Well?”

“I thought I would mention it. You might not feel inclined for society, even quiet, matter-of-fact society, just yet.”

“What is there to fear, Jemmy?”

“Thank God, nothing! But chance words in a mixed company may arise, and may be hurtful to you; Susan even thought that you might prefer to spend a day or two with her, beginning from this morning.”

“Susan is afraid that I shall fall in love with Amy Saville again. Surely she knows me better than that, and should have greater faith in my firmness, and my sense of honour.”

“Pardon me, Bob, but you jump hastily at conclusions. I don’t believe that Susan has a suspicion of the kind,” said the minister; “in my own opinion, I think Susan is considering Miss Saville more than yourself.”

“If I thought I should embarrass Miss Saville for an instant, I would go. If Miss Saville thought my presence here would give her pain, I do not think she would come.”

“There’s something in that.”

“It looks as if either she or I had not the courage to look each other in the face,” said Robert, energetically; “the past is all forgotten and forgiven, only eccentricity of action is likely to revive its sad associations.”

“Very well.”

“I have not the vanity to believe that my presence will affect her, James; if it did not in the days when I was more worthy of her,

why should it now that I am cast down and ashamed?"

"I do not fear you, brother. Had I a doubt of your firmness, the faintest shadow of suspicion that you had a thought of Amy Saville in your heart, I would beg you at once to leave us, for your credit's sake."

"Don't fear!"

The minister looked a little perplexed; he could not read what was in that brother's heart, and he knew there was no wisdom in the step which brought him into Amy's society again. He knew Amy Saville's story better than any one living—better than Frederick Alland himself—and it was for Amy's sake he was speaking, not for his brother Robert's. His sister Susan had spoken also for her sake; but she knew Robert's weakness, possibly, and with a woman's quickness of perception, guessed at the smouldering remnants of a fire still in the heart of a man professing to have outlived everything appertaining to the past.

Both the minister and his sister thought Frederick Alland had acted very injudiciously—I do not doubt that many of my readers are

of the same opinion. And yet, if it be an unwise step to bring the old lovers together, surely it is more unwise to be afraid of the meeting. Mr. Alland had spoken of perfect confidence between him and Amy; why should he betray a fear of her, or of the friend he had recently made? He was a proud man, the reader is aware; he had had ever the opinion that he was as good as most men, and the engagement once entered into between Amy and himself cast all doubts to the shadow-land. He knew that Amy had promised to be his wife; but he knew nothing of the struggle that it had been to say, "Yes!"

Well for Robert Bayford that he knew nothing of that struggle also; that the simple facts of the case were to him the breaking off of an engagement because the lady preferred a parson to him. If she made her choice in those early days when he was a rich man, it was a burlesque of romance to imagine that now he was poor and disgraced, she was likely to think more highly of him. This would have been Robert's reasoning had he given much thought to the matter; but there

was nothing to perplex him, because he was certain that Amy had not entertained an affection for him since she was a little girl in India. He felt he should like to see her again, even by Alland's side, and with Alland looking for love in the depths of her dark eyes—but merely to see her, because she was a link in the past wherein he had been a happier man! Had he dreamed of falling in love with her again?—never for one instant had he the vanity to believe that anything he could say or do would affect *her*—he would have taken his sister Susan's advice, and spent a day or two at the Glade's; he would have shunned her society rather than have sought it so eagerly.

Having these ideas on things in general, he was ready to receive Amy with perfect self-possession, when the evening brought a few guests to the tea-table, at which Dorcas so gracefully presided. He objected to the watchful eyes of Susan across the table, but he was not embarrassed under the surveillance. Amy could trust him, and Alland could trust him—knowing not the right plan of the map

in Susan's mind ; he thought it rather suspicious and mean of her to believe that, at a quiet little reunion, he was about to commence all the old folly in the face of the grim truth that was a rock ahead to all love-thoughts. However, it mattered little ; he would set them all right by his manner ; he felt excited that evening, and capable of being more like the Robert Bayford of past times than he had been since poor Mr. Chark brought him one day the worst of news.

It did not require much effort ; he was at home there ; he had forgotten Lang's Place and Cissy Daly ; all he respected in the world was gathered round James Bayford's tea-table. He was anxious to place Amy Saville at her ease, if there were any nervousness likely to intrude upon the quiet enjoyment of the evening.

He was right in his suspicions, that his sister was watching him. Susan Glade was a woman of perception, and understood the tortuous map of cross purposes before her. She saw the danger to Robert, who was weak ; and perhaps to Amy, who had never been

strong—though she knew less of her past life than James Bayford, she had guessed at the truth when he was unsuspecting, and her memory was not unretentive.

This Mr. Alland was a very foolish man, she thought; had he asked her opinion on the subject, she would have told him so, without much regard for his feelings. She was very good friends with Mr. Alland now; but it would have taken very little pressing for her to have assumed the part of monitor, and given the rector the benefit of her valuable advice.

But Mr. Alland was sitting by her husband's side, at the further extremity of the room. Josiah Glade and he had drifted into argument, not on religious topics, but on some matter connected, if we remember aright, with the town drainage—which had been defective since Queen Anne's time—and passing events were not heeded by either. Robert had taken his place by the side of Amy. Had not Amy Saville been his ward almost? and should he show any fear of approaching her, now the ice was broken, and they were friends again?

She was to be the wife of one far better and nobler than he ; he knew the depth of his own unworthiness—moreover, he was a man of honour, and she was sacred in his eyes.

And Amy? We have a right to follow this analysis closely, lest in the future events which followed the meeting, our readers should judge this feeble hero and heroine of ours too harshly. Amy, the reader is aware, was not a strong-minded woman ; by a past vacillation, an engagement in which her heart had been bound, was snapped suddenly asunder, working much mischief and disturbing more minds than one. Lovable, impulsive, even eccentric, she had confessed the state of her mind, when she knew it least of all ; the whole current of life had been turned aside, and never again, from that day, flowed peacefully on to the sea.

Still she believed herself a very firm girl, ready to sacrifice herself and her future at the shrine of duty, and to play a part in the crowd, with the arrow in her heart, that should deceive the whole world for her life-



time. She believed now that she loved Frederick Alland ; that she had taught herself to love him as deeply as she had ever esteemed him, and it was only till the old phantom crossed her path that the shock of the truth almost warned her of danger. When she had formally accepted the rector, she had confessed to have loved Robert Bayford once ; but he had thought little of that past love when she promised to be his wife, and teach herself to turn all the wealth of her heart towards him.

The phantom had come back, but Amy Saville was firm and confident. She was to be Alland's wife, and her own respect was a tower of strength. She had no fear for herself, and no fear for Robert, who, doubtless, had long ago lived down all thoughts of her. He was an altered man, and she was to be married in the spring—what danger was there in meeting again and being friends ? Should she be foolish enough to confess, by her studied avoidance of him, that even now, in the latter days, she could not trust herself to meet him ? The woman's pride would not

suffer that, and she went boldly and fearlessly to James Bayford's house.

Talking to this old lover, concerning whom there was no fear, did but engender further confidence in herself and him. He was so altered; he was so grave and stern a man now; more than ever the disparity of their years appeared to assert itself. In his face there were lines now, which told of age or care, and at least made him look old; there were threads of silver in his hair; his whole manner was changed. He had greatly altered—why, he was almost old enough to be her father!

So these two spoke in an unembarrassed manner of the old times—the dangerous old times, when she was a girl who knew little of life, and yet had pledged her word to the greatest and most solemn of life's contracts—and both felt it was pleasant to be friends at least.

She spoke of Robert's return to India a great deal, a subject that he did not care to dwell too much upon. Strangely enough, during the last few days he had not looked

forward to that expedition with the same eagerness. It was a long journey ; he was setting forth alone ; his old friends there would all have gone their different ways, and there would be nothing but isolation in the East.

“ I am too old to make new friends,” he said to her, after expressing something like the above thoughts ; “ my ductility of temperament, that pleased the stranger and drew him towards me, is all gone. After all, India will be a very dull place for me.”

“ I do not think so, Mr. Bayford.”

“ You advise me to leave all my friends, then ?”

“ Yes. An active life is best for you—you are skilled in the intricacies of Indian commerce, and will become a rich man, I hope.”

“ What a prospect of future felicity ! Miss Saville, I would not step a hundred yards out of my way to become a rich man to-morrow.”

“ But the pursuit of wealth is a distraction—a——”

“A distraction—yes!”

He had not waited for her to complete her remark. It was a word that seemed to him so singularly appropriate, that almost involuntarily he had repeated it.

The faintest colour rose to her face, for a reason that seemed unaccountable to her. He had repeated her words so strangely—there was such a mournful ring in his voice, that it vibrated within her heart, and made her shiver, just for a moment, as with cold.

“You find the room chilly, Miss Saville,” said Susan, from the distance; “come and sit by me near the fire.”

“Thank you—I think I will.”

Robert Bayford watched the process of transfer, and then entered into conversation with Alland and Glade, taking up the subject of town drainage as though he had been versed in the matter all his life. James Bayford and Dorcas joined the two ladies by the fireside, and for a while the company was split into two sections, until Dorcas thought a little music would be an advantage, and begged Amy to favour them with one of those

grand Beethoven pieces in the performance of which she excelled. Amy was too unaffected to require much pressing, and presently the symphony had begun ; and Alland, forgetful of drain-pipes and sewage, and carried away by his old passion for music, was standing close to Amy's side, absorbed in the *adagio* movement. How eagerly he studied the music, watched admiringly the play of her white fingers, and then looked at her as he alone had a right to look now ! Robert Bayford saw all this, and did not feel quite so comfortable as before. It was all natural, and to be expected, and yet it thrilled him with a sense of far-off pain. It was not envy—he had never been an envious man ; it was not a spark of jealousy at the thought of how things had altered, and the clergyman stepped into his place with eyes that told of a love as strong as his had been ; it was only the past thoughts crowding *en masse* towards him, born of that symphony which he had heard so often in Chark's cottage on the hills. All his life he had had no love for music, but he felt that he was listening then with an in-

tentness very new to him. If he were no lover of music, his memory was a retentive one, and the strains were as familiar to him as though they were but of yesterday's date. He could but listen, though the listening pained him more and more, and a something, which he could not subdue or shake off, kept throbbing at his temples.

With the music came back all the past associations connected with it. The minister's drawing-room faded away, as the landscape on the lighted screen fades away beneath the hand of the operator with the lanterns, and Robert was in the cottage of Mr. Chark. It was the old times again—the dear old times, when he was an honest man, worthy of a fair girl's love. Mr. Chark was lying on the couch, half listening, and half revolving in his mind some broad scheme of philanthropy, the only drawback to which was its impracticability. Mr. Alland was turning over the leaves of Amy's music, and Amy belonged to *him*, and him alone! It was summer time, the bow-window was open, and the sweet summer air was wafted in by the faint breeze; all

associations connected with it leaping from the dim vista of his innocence, and troubling him as they had done that night. He left the room and went into the moonlight, on to a grass sward flanked by a formal row of trees; and Cissy Daly came with her opera cloak over her head to look for him, and ask what was the matter?

And here, sure enough, to keep up the resemblance, was a female figure, with her head shawled, coming from the house across the lawn towards him. Not Amy—that was not likely. Susan or Dorcas? Susan!

He could see the anxiety in her eyes when she was near him. He did not like her searching looks—he resented them in his heart before a word was spoken.

“Dorcas was afraid you were not well, Robert?”

“A mere spinning of the head, which is not so strong as it used to be.”

“Evening parties are not good for you, yet awhile.”

“Do you call this an evening party, Susan?” he said, with a scornful little laugh.

“It is a party of friends, at least.”

“Let us return to it; the friends will wonder what we have to talk about, out here.”

“Why go back to-night, Robert?”

“Why *not*?” was the sharp rejoinder.

“Because you are not safe—because you are making yourself unhappy. Oh, Robert! already, in this little time, you are thinking too much of Amy again.”

Susan spoke out boldly. All her life she had been a woman who spoke her mind plainly. He had asked her for the truth of that which was in her thoughts, and she had answered him at once.

“It’s a lie!” he said, so angrily that she shrank back a step or two at his vehemence.

“Don’t be frightened, Susan,” he added, with a forced laugh; “but you annoyed me by your foolish suspicions, and the good-temper I once had was stolen from me somewhere in London. I’m a hasty man now.”

“You have not wholly recovered from your



illness, and you fling yourself into temptation—you do!" she added, as he stamped his foot impatiently at this renewal of the charge.

"What is there to tempt me?—another man's promised wife?"

"Yes."

"I hold her as sacred as if she were already Mrs. Alland. My love for her withered when the storm came—she is but the daughter of a dear dead friend of mine."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure."

"I don't know why I should not believe you," said Mrs. Glade, sadly; "unless I fear that you do not know the thoughts in your own heart."

"You can trust me—you can trust me!" he repeated twice, in a hoarse voice.

"I hope so. Still, Robert dear, you are *not* strong yet, either in mind or body; and there is a deception that even blinds ourselves to the truth. You only may be harmed by its encouragement—and we are all so anxious to see you well and strong again."

“You must all think me a fool, if you become anxious about me because a room is too hot.”

“Robert!”

He did not heed the whispered reproach, but went back hastily into the house. The symphony was over, and they were talking of Beethoven and his genius, in the drawing-room. He struck in rather at random; but his remarks passed current, and when Susan returned they were all chatting very agreeably together.

Robert felt that a watch was upon him for the remainder of the evening, and his annoyance increased in consequence. What right had she to suspect him, or his want of principle? Was he madman enough to fall a second time in love with a girl who had jilted him? He, too, who had outlived love, and might, considering his present sensations, think with greater propriety of his grave than Amy Saville. He who was so immeasurably beneath her now!

He did not recover his equanimity for the remainder of the evening; but he played his

part well nevertheless, and only Josiah Glade's wife guessed the trouble hidden beneath his affected composure.

## CHAPTER IV.

## “PLAYING WITH FIRE.”

WE may as well inquire here what impression had been left on Amy Saville's mind by the events of that evening particularized in our last chapter. Surely Susan Glade was over-suspicious, and far too ready to leap to a conclusion which no one but herself dreamt of, when this young woman, a sensitive plant that a breath disturbed, read nothing in Robert Bayford's manner to alarm her.

He did not love her—he had no right to love her, Amy thought, drawing herself up very proudly and defiantly ; if there were one thing

him, but the sober second thought balked the fancy. Amy was not suspicious; Amy had loved him much longer than he had any idea of—when they were separated she had loved him most of all. What might Amy Saville not think herself called upon to atone for?—what new romance, born of the old, might spring up in her fancy, to blight the after-life of more than her or Robert, if she thought Robert loved her still.

Robert was not worthy of Amy now, thought Susan; and though she had never taken to Mr. Alland as her brother James had, yet the rector of Chipnam had staked his life's peace on one venture, and she would not have marred it for the sake of happiness to Robert. Her elder brother had forfeited all claim to Miss Saville—and it was a selfishness of passion that disgraced him, if he nursed a thought of her at that time. Oh! for only an hour's sober talk with Robert, to tell all this patiently and earnestly, and be sure of his patient and earnest attention in return.

It was at this period, when the doubts were

still clouding the atmosphere, that Alland arrived one day at Bayford's house, with an open paper in his hand.

"I am called suddenly to London. I have come to bid you adieu *en passant*, and have not a moment to spare. The train starts at eleven, and there is not even time to scale the heights to my Amy."

"Any bad news, Alland?"

"My father is taken very ill in London. A friend telegraphs to me from Lang's Place, Drury Lane. Do you know it?"

"I should think I did," said Robert, impetuously.

"I regret to add that I have grave doubts of this being a scheme to extort money—money, and not my presence, being telegraphed for. Will you see to Amy whilst I am gone, Robert? I constitute you her guardian."

"Thank you; but I—I was thinking of accompanying you."

"Indeed!"

"If your father be ill, I should like to see him. He was a friend to me in my illness,

odd fish as he was. I have a fancy that he would be glad to see me."

"Thank you. I shall write to-morrow if you are wanted, or return if I have been imposed upon. See to Amy—ask her to your house, Mr. Bayford," he said to the minister; "don't let her get too dull up there in her dove-cot."

"I will ask her this evening."

He was sorry he had promised that, the moment afterwards. For the instant he had forgotten Robert—whom he did *not* suspect, and yet concerning whom he was as perplexed as his sister.

Mr. Frederick Alland departed, looking rather more anxious concerning the result of his journey than he had cared to avow, and Amy Saville was asked that evening to the minister's house.

Robert Bayford felt more restraint in Amy's presence now Mr. Alland had departed. He could be more frank, more friendly, when Alland was with Amy, than in his absence—with no one to watch him. There *was* something that troubled him that evening; he

could not tell what; he did not seek to define it. It was a very happy evening; even the secret uneasiness he felt did not render him less content. It was an uneasiness that thrilled him with a vague but pleasurable feeling. It was a stride nearer the truth, that every day he was approaching—that was to face him presently, and meet him full front. He could scarcely believe that the clock on the landing was striking ten, and it was time for Amy to put on her bonnet; surely she had only been there a few minutes—a graceful figure, that lit up home, and made the place so radiant!

“Miss—Miss Saville is not going that dark way home alone, I hope?” said Robert, with a half stammer.

“Dorcas and I will see her to the door of the villa,” was the prompt response of his brother. “It is a beautiful night, and of the frost that is without we need not be afraid.”

“We will all go,” said Robert.

The minister gave a dry little cough. Robert was strangely inconsiderate, he thought,



or strangely confident in his own belief of having outlived every reminiscence.

Amy returned to the room, and they all went out into the frosty night together.

“Mr. Alland has constituted me guardian,” he said, offering his arm to Amy.

For the first time she hesitated—looked somewhat nervously at James. James was about to propose his escort, when the other, reddening, said,

“Surely you can trust me, Miss Saville?”

“Trust you,” with a voice that she essayed to render firm; “why should I not?”

They went towards the Chipnam hills very silently, James Bayford and his wife in the rear. It was the first time her hand had touched his arm since he had given her up for ever; it was another link in the old chain of associations that riveted him to Chipnam. They went on very silently we say, but both their hearts were full. Both were thinking of the last time they walked thus—one Sunday evening coming from St. Edward’s Church, whither his will had compelled her to go. The moon was only one day past the full, and the

night was as bright as it had been when Beethoven's symphony in C had affected his brain a little. He could see her face very clearly, and he did not care to talk. To his surprise there were tears stealing from her eyes, quivering on her long lashes ere they fell, and startled him out of his affected composure.

"Miss Saville! what is the matter?" he said, with very ill tact.

He had lowered his voice, so that those good friends in the rear should not hear him. He would have given worlds to know what those tears were about.

"Nothing. What should there be?"

"You are crying!"

She drew her veil down hastily; for a moment seemed inclined to snatch her hand from his arm.

"I am not well; I have been troubled lately."

"But ——"

"But don't worry me!" she cried angrily; "I am not called upon to explain. You should not have asked me—you had no right, sir!"

“ Pardon me,” he cried.

It was an earnest voice that vibrated in her ears, and made every nerve quiver. She felt that she had been harsh and uncourteous, and attributed too much to his words.

“ There is nothing to pardon, Mr. Bayford,” she said; “ I am a very foolish woman to-night. Shall we wait for your brother?—we are outwalking them.”

Robert did not answer, but he paused with her till the minister and his wife came up. Then the four proceeded together to the villa, talking of the beauty of the night, of the light and shadow on the Chipnam hills, of the sudden news which had taken Mr. Alland to London, &c.

At the villa they left Amy, strangely anxious to get into the house and away from them all; then they walked back, discoursing on general topics, that interested at least only two of the number.

When they were home again, Robert Bayford drew his chair to the fire and commenced filling his meerschaum pipe very gravely.

“Are you going to smoke to-night?” asked his brother.

“Dorcas allows me one after-supper pipe,” he said, looking towards his brother’s wife.

“You will promise me to be content with one.”

“On my honour.”

“Then James and I will bid you good night—trusting you even with the safe disposal of the fire-guard.”

“Thank you.”

They bade him good night and went upstairs, to talk of him—to sit down side by side, with very grave faces, and hold a hasty council of war together. He had betrayed himself that night more to them than to Amy, for they had set themselves to watch him narrowly—having for the first time both suspected which way he was drifting.

“I must speak to him, or Amy Saville,” said James Bayford; “better to him, perhaps.”

“Not to Amy Saville, for the world!” said Dorcas, in alarm.

“ We must stop this—we must do our best to stop this.”

“ Will you let me speak to Robert, James ? He is restless and irritable, and I—I think he will listen to me—his brother’s wife—with patience. We women understand this matter better than you men.”

“ ‘ We women ’ are getting very conceited,” said the minister, with a laugh.

“ You men always say the wrong word in the wrong place ; and sentimental talk from man to man always jars.”

“ Spoken like a philosopher,” said James ; “ you are quite right, Dorcas, my dear. The matter, too, is not very serious, I hope, and if nipped in the bud at once, will end well. Will you remind Robert that he is not acting quite—quite right ? ”

“ Yes.”

Dorcas had risen, and was already at the door.

“ Not to-night, my love. I don’t mean anything half so precipitate as that.”

“ To-night, while he is thinking of her—it is best.”

“You are very confident in your own powers, Dorcas ; remember Susan has failed.”

“He is like a child, and must be treated gently, kindly, like one.”

“Try the experiment, then. I think you will be successful—you who played for so long a while, at home, the part of peacemaker.”

“Wish me success,” she said, as she went noiselessly and swiftly down the stairs again.

## CHAPTER V.

## FACING THE TRUTH.

ROBERT was gloomily surveying the dying embers of the fire, when his sister-in-law came silently into the room. The pipe had died out, and was being swung listlessly by its stem in his left hand; his right elbow rested on his knee, and his right hand clutched his chin firmly as he gazed intently before him at the lurid coals. His nerves were not of the old stamp yet, for he gave a visible start as Dorcas laid her hand upon his shoulder.

“What are you thinking about, Robert?”

“Oh! are you there?” he said, without

answering her question ; “ I thought you had been asleep some time.”

“ No.”

Robert looked towards Dorcas uneasily. A suspicion of the object of her visit then began to trouble him ; there was something in her looks he did not like.

“ I have come down to ask, Robert, whether you still think of going to India ?”

“ What ! are you anxious to get rid of me ?”

“ For one reason—yes.”

“ Even our best friends are soon wearied of the society of an interloper,” said Robert ; “ I will speak to Jemmy about leaving very shortly.”

“ Your brother and I have been talking of your departure—thinking it would be much better, if your mind were made up, to say good-bye to Chipnam.”

“ It would be better, perhaps,” he answered, gloomily.

“ For your sake—only for yours, Robert,” she hastened to add, and her hand fell, with a sister’s tenderness, on his shoulder again ;



“may I tell you why, without offending you?”

“If you like,” was the low reply.

“Because you are falling into temptation again, or rather, because, of your own free will, with a deliberation that is unworthy of your manhood, you are walking into danger, and preparing misery for yourself and others.”

“Not others—only myself, Mrs. Bayford.”

“You cannot guarantee that others shall escape—that Miss Saville or Mr. Alland may not read you at any time, as truthfully as I have, and be pained and mortified at the result. Oh! Robert, you had better go away and never see her more, if seeing brings about the old folly, from which we all had hoped you would be free.”

“You are kind to hope for me—I am wholly unworthy of the consideration of honest people. Write me down a villain, Dorcas, and cast me from your hearts.”

“No—no.”

“I am a villain and a fool,” he said, bitterly; “villain enough to spare no feelings

in that selfish love which has returned to me, and fool enough to betray to all who care to watch me the nature of the vice that haunts me. Yes, I will go."

"We shall be sorry to lose you, but——"

"Yes, yes, I understand," he interrupted; "spare me the rest—I know what you are going to say. When shall I go?"

"There is no occasion for any needless haste, if you——"

He interrupted her again.

"If I keep away from Amy Saville," he concluded; "but I have not strength to do that—I am a child still, led by the will which prompts it to act. Mrs. Bayford, it is the same love which leads me on; I do not believe, in all my recklessness and vice, I shut it from me, or, in the madness of my despair, I lived it down. Here in Chipnam it blazes forth again—a pent-up fire, which only circumstances subdued; it will not spare her in my selfishness; it will not remember all that has happened since the thoughts of her being my wife were hurled away in desperation."

“What a sad story it has been, Robert!”

“So I will go away,” he said, after a moment’s silent study of the embers; “blest by your good wishes for my welfare, I will try my best to become a different man.”

“You *will* do your best,” urged Dorcas; “you will not let the new folly—I call it new—come between you and the resolutions you have spoken of to James. Years hence, brother, I am confident that you will be a happy man.”

“Thank you for that confidence.”

He rose, laid his pipe on the mantelpiece, and then stood with his back to the fire, and his arms linked behind him.

“I wanted such a friend as you to strip the mask off the delusion, and show the dishonourableness of the act. *Don't* think me wholly bad, Dorcas, when I am gone. I am a tempest-tossed soul, and there is a power beyond my own that drives me on.”

“And a power beyond that, and yours and mine, to sweep this little trouble from your heart, and turn your thoughts to heaven.

The power of God, which, like His peace, passeth all understanding."

"May it lead my steps aright! Good night."

She hesitated. She would have said much more to him, but one glance at his troubled face assured her that she had said enough. She was one who knew when to stop, and in that accomplishment possibly she had even the advantage over her husband.

"Good night, Robert."

She shook hands with him and left him. When the door had closed behind her, he sat down and stared at the fire again, taking his head between his hands this time, the better to study the story he read in the charred coals before him.

It was the story of the life ahead of him, and not all the study in the world could tell him how it would end. But a step beyond that room wherein the lamp burned low, and the moon streamed through the half-drawn curtains, and all was dark before him—he tried to guess at it, and it baffled and pained him. He thought of India, and shuddered at the

long journey thither, and the distance he should be away from all on whose love he still reckoned a little; he thought of life flowing on peacefully here in Chipnam during his absence, every one so happy, and he alone in the stranger's land so wretched. His sister-in-law had spoken of a power to change all this, to set him with a new heart in the world, working upwards for good; he had no faith in it. He should not despair again, or go dashing down the hill to the old level; in his way, perhaps, he should do his duty, and fulfil the tasks allotted to him by a stern necessity, but he should be ever the automaton, never the man of flesh and blood, with his soul in the work that was ready to his hand.

Still, for all this, and despite all this, better to go. Here was listlessness of action, the temptation to forget and set aside and tempt others; better to go at once and let the waters of oblivion close over his head. And in the midst of these thoughts, born of the warning given him by his brother's wife, there passed athwart the picture the figure of the one girl who had loved him, who, in the hope

of that better life of which he doubted, gave up her sinful happiness and went her way. In all his life what good had he done, what sacrifice had *he* made?—before him, by a little effort, by a sacrifice perhaps, there was a step which would at least make *one* happy. Why did he shrink from it? he who had never done a good action in his life, who even in his despair had studied nothing but himself.

“Brother,” said he to James Bayford in the morning, “I am going to Huntingdon to-day or to-morrow. Hence to London, and then to Huntingdon.”

“Indeed!”

“Tell me if a good action be not its own reward—if to save a soul from perishing, a man is not justified in sinking every thought of self?”

“Go on—what do you mean?”

James Bayford would not reply too hastily—his brother regarded him so strangely.

“I am going to marry Cissy Daly.”

“Surely not!” exclaimed the amazed minister.

“I am going to marry the only girl who

has ever loved me for myself—who was my slave, and served me faithfully, and would have died for me if I had asked her.”

“Remember how your intimacy began with her; remember how ——”

“The dead has buried its dead—of the past I know nothing,” cried Robert hastily; “I was served faithfully as a mistress—will she serve me less so when I show my gratitude by giving her my name? Man, I rescue her from shame, I give her an honest name, I take with me from England one who will love me for myself; I stand between her and the world, a shield against the stones you Christians hurl at her.”

“This is the old recklessness, Robert. I am sorry Dorcas spoke last night. She has unsettled you, and driven you to a step of which hereafter you will repent.”

“She has shown me what a weak and erring fool I was becoming.”

“I could have trusted you.”

“Not for long, Jemmy. You were growing anxious—you and Susan both. I read it in your looks a week ago.”

“ Still, I could have trusted you not to commit a folly or a wrong.”

“ Why is marrying Cissy Daly so objectionable to you? You who preach atonement, and mercy to those who repent—you who once suggested such a step to me ?”

“ You do not love her—you have never loved her.”

“ I am going on for forty years of age, and you talk to me of love,” said Robert, with a bitter laugh ; “ you who know what there is left me to love in the life that’s before me. Speak rather of the gift of charity, and all that your Bible says concerning that. Don’t say to the one unselfish act I would do before I die—that it is wholly wrong.”

The Reverend James Bayford was non-plussed by his brother’s earnestness. He did not see his way clearly to a reply. To raise a fallen woman from shame to an honest life—a woman who he believed had truly repented of the error of her ways—was heroic ; but still in Robert’s case the intention followed so rapidly on the new folly he had been harbouring, that it savoured rather of reck-



lessness than of the result of sober reasoning. He said so after a while; and Robert answered that he had awakened from his folly to a sense of that which was his duty; he had made up his mind for good!

“You will see me again. When I am married, Cissy and I will come to Chipnam for a moment to bid you farewell—to ask your blessing on our future life. Till then,” holding forth his hand, “good-bye!”

“You are not going at once?”

“At once,” he replied; “I have been studying the time-tables and find there is an early train at eight. I shall breakfast on my way, or in London. Good-bye.”

“I will come with you as far as the station, Robert.”

“As you will—but, don’t argue with me on the road. I shall not change my mind.”

James Bayford looked at him and shivered. How well he remembered that hard inflexible look which beat back all hope, as the sea-cliff beats back the waves into spray. He had seen it long ago, when Cissy Daly was a different woman, and Robert and she were living

in that great unlucky house upon the high-road ; then it had expressed a determination to do evil, and yet was the same look still, and his heart sank to see it there again.

“ You will bid Dorcas good-bye ? ”

“ To be sure. And Susan—I should not like Susan to think I had forgotten her. We must call at her house on our way.”

James Bayford was leaving the parlour in search of his wife, when Robert said, hastily,

“ Speak of my intentions after I am gone, Jemmy. I cannot bear any more discussion—you will spare me ? ”

“ Well—yes.”

He left the room and returned with Dorcas.

“ Our brother is waiting to bid you good-bye, Dorcas ; he leaves by the nine o'clock train.”

“ So early—shall we not see you again ? ”

“ Presently—in a week or two, with a friend. Good-bye—and thank you for rousing me from inaction.”

They shook hands and parted. Dorcas

stood at the door watching the brothers proceeding up the high-road; there was something still to disturb her. There was a new look in Robert's face, which was not there yesternight; a fresh thought was impressed thereon, and its shadow was a heavy one.

"I have come to bid you good-bye for a while, Susan," said Robert, when they had reached Josiah Glade's house, and Susan and her husband had recovered the surprise of the brothers' early visit. "Chipnam does not agree with me, and Jemmy and Dorcas are of the same opinion."

"Perhaps you *will* be better away," said Susan, sadly.

"I hope so."

"What are you going away in such a hurry for?" was the abrupt query of Josiah Glade.

"There is business to do, and little time to do it in."

"Can I help you?"

"Thank you, no."

"Where are you going first?"

"London."

Glade groaned.

“ Oh ! the old place. You’ll be going to gin palaces and theatres again, Robert ? ”

Robert could scarcely forbear a laugh, low-spirited as he felt.

“ You haven’t much confidence in me, Glade ? ”

“ I haven’t any,” was the abrupt reply.

They all laughed at this, which gave a happy turn to the parting. Robert and James went on again in the direction of the railway station. They passed half-through the town, striking off midway for the cross-path leading to St. Edward’s. The Chipnam hills were shadowing the road again, the frost lay thickly on them that winter’s morning. That very road they had taken last night with Amy Saville ; far ahead there, up the winding path, they could see the little villa wherein she lingered still, and clung to all the memories connected with it.

Robert paused and looked towards it, until his brother reminded him of the little time he had to spare.

“ Forgive my weakness, Jemmy—only a spasm of the foolish old sentiment.”

“Don't let spasms of sentiment, real or sham ones, delude you into a step which you may repent all your life.”

James Bayford could not forbear that one little hint; he hoped his brother might think of it as the train whirled him to London. Even yet there was time before him to think, to pause ere the one great irrevocable step there was no retracing, was made.

They were at the railway station shaking hands—the younger brother looking wistfully into the face of the elder.

“I shall see you again soon, Bob, God willing.”

“Yes, in a few weeks, at the latest. This is not the stiff, formal parting that is coming, old fellow.”

“Still it's a hard one.”

“Why?” was the sharp interrogatory.

“You leave me in uncertainty—I am in fear.”

“Fear nothing, Jemmy. All is plain sailing before me—all's for the best.”

The train came clanking to the station as he spoke; the brothers shook hands and parted

once more. Once again in search of peace—  
or forgetfulness, which?—and with something  
of the old reckless dash, went Robert Bayford  
away from Chipnam, and all that had held  
him spell-bound there.

## CHAPTER VI.

## OLD ALLAND'S ADVICE.

RATTLING away to London, the thought came to Robert Bayford that he would call at Lang's Place and see the Allands, father and son. There was no need to hasten on to the village in Huntingdonshire ; it had only been considered imperative to fly from Chipnam by a host of anxious friends. Time enough in a day or two for Cissy Daly ; he would do nothing rashly, though he had made up his mind to the future before him.

Carefully mapped out now was that future ; he saw the road before him very plainly, and

who was waiting for him therein to be his helpmate "ever afterwards." Only yesternight, and looking through the glass darkly—now, beyond there, all so clear a landscape, and the darkness rolling away like a cloud!

"Yes, he would see the Allands. The old man, whose life had been that of a vagrant and scamp, but who had offered his services when he himself was ill, and therefore had a claim upon him; and the son, who was his rival, who was to be the husband of Amy, the father of Amy's children. That man was his friend now, and had placed confidence in him; he would tell him of the snare he had been walking into blind-fold, when the warning voice of a friend had brought him back to himself; he would tell him that he could not shake from his mind the old folly which had scathed him—that, with no faith in his self-command, he had fled the danger besetting him.

There was an attraction that lured him on to Lang's Place. He would have gone thither had there been no object in view. A stern episode in his life had been played there, and perhaps it was well for him to see the



stage on which the part had been enacted. It would do him good and make him strong, he thought; and with a vague idea that it was stern philosophy he was practising, he passed from the railway station to the streets, through which he threaded his way to the old haunts.

Certainly there was a change in him, for he shuddered at the prospect when he was in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane again. Was it possible that he had sat down content with life in such a wilderness of poverty and crime, and let honest men go by him, shrugging their shoulders at his supineness? Was this the place he had called home, and given up in?

He went down Lang's Place very slowly. Faces he recognized passed him on the narrow pavement; faces that knew him not, so much had his better health and braver thoughts altered him. He went to the old home, pushing open the door, which was ajar, and proceeding up-stairs in a mechanical fashion, as though it were home, and there were no questions to ask there. His hand was on the

door of the old room before he recollected that there were strangers therein, and they would resent his intrusion perhaps; then he turned and ascended the next creaking flight of stairs to the back room where old Alland had been known to reside in his time.

He knocked, and some one crossed the room immediately. The door opened, and Frederick Alland came out on the landing.

“Ah! Bayford—what has happened at Chipnam?”

“Nothing particular.”

“What has brought you to London, then?”

“An intention of getting married as quickly as possible,” was the reply. “I’ll tell you all about the happy bride, presently. How is your father?”

“Very ill—he must not be moved yet, the doctor tells me. He has been talking about you only this morning. Will you see him?”

“To be sure. I am in Lang’s Place to offer my services.”

Alland led the way into the small miserably-furnished room which the senior Alland had occupied for some months. The invalid

turned restlessly in his bed, but slept on. The two young men silently took their seats by the fire, facing each other.

“Is there any danger?” asked Robert.

“The doctor thinks there is nothing serious to anticipate, and *he* is very hopeful too. I am attempting the hard task of reformation with him.”

“With what success?”

“With none.”

Old Alland turned uneasily again. Finally, with a peculiar grunt, opened his eyes, and struggled on to one elbow. In his sick bed, wasted by illness as he was, he looked a scamp still.

“Who’s that in the corner there?” he asked; “not Bayford?”

“Yes—Bayford.”

Robert rose, and walked to the bedside, holding out his hand. Old Alland hesitated before he put forth his own feverish claw towards him in return.

“This is more than I could expect,” he muttered.

“Why—aren’t you an old friend?”

Old Alland brightened up at the remark. No one had claimed him for a friend for many years.

“Thank you, Bayford—thank you,” he said; “you are very good to say so, considering what a humbug I am, and how I served you and all your family. Why, I betrayed you again only a little while ago, you know?”

“Forgiven, sir—forgiven. I was betrayed to my own good.”

“I ought to lie here with a clear conscience, considering all things. Good Lord! to think my own clever son is here to nurse me, and talk to me, and—ugh!—read to me.”

“It’s his duty.”

“Where did he learn duty from, I wonder. I never taught it to him, I’ll swear. I wish he could play chess a little better, and was not so fond of acting the preacher here.”

“You mustn’t grow dissatisfied,” said Robert, glancing towards the son, who stood with his elbow on the mantelpiece, looking down at the fire.

“Certainly not; that won’t do, now I’m floored—

‘When the devil was sick,  
A devil the saint would be.’

And a devilish bad saint I make even now;  
don’t I, Fred Alland?”

“‘Rome wasn’t built in a day,’” muttered the rector.

“Hollo! I thought you hated quotations?”

“It depends upon what work is quoted from.”

“True. Let me see: what was I talking about?—oh! my saintship that don’t fit. And yet I’m sorrowful enough, though there’s philosophy enough in me to know that my soul won’t be at zero when I’m a little better—

‘However great a fuss  
Folks make about their present sorrows,  
The lapse of half-a-dozen morrows  
Changes their tone.’

Poor Lunn! there are no more *Horæ Jocosæ*  
—for—him.”

He fell into a dose as the last word escaped him, and Robert Bayford went back to the rector’s side.

“This is uphill work, Mr. Alland.”

“Turning evil from its downward course is always difficult,” he answered; “I shall flinch not to the last.”

“Is he grateful for your coming hither?”

“In his way.”

“Do you tire of it?”

“Tire!” exclaimed Alland; “no; why do you ask?”

“Because the effort will be in vain; because I fancy, with all your earnestness, that your method is the wrong one—that a man more plain and blunt might do some good there.”

“You are thinking of your brother?”

“Yes, he would be glad to help you.”

“I will not ask for help yet,” said Alland, a little irritably; “I am not inclined to give up at the first check to my efforts.”

“*Check!*” murmured the sleeper.

“You spoke of being married, Bayford; what does it mean?”

“I had a thought strike me last night,” said Robert, assuming a position similar to the rector’s; “a thought that I had not

treated a poor erring woman well. The woman was faithful to me, loved me with her whole heart, shared with me all my trials when black care laid a heavy hand on my shoulder, and yet—I let her go away without a word!”

“You are speaking of Miss Daly?”

“Yes.”

“You would make her your wife?”

“Yes.”

Old Alland was leaning on his elbow in the bed again.

“Beaumont says, ‘Equality is no rule in love’s grammar,’ Bayford. Still, *prenez garde*.”

“I thought you were asleep?”

“Oh! there is no sleeping long here. I shall have better rest when I’m strong enough to be taken to Chipnam. Fred has promised me a dose of country air in the most handsome manner. Filial love has gained the mastery over his confounded pride; he’s not such a bad fellow, after all.”

“You return to Chipnam, Bayford?” inquired the subject of discourse.

“ Shortly—for a few hours, perhaps.”

“ We will have another bout at the royal game, Bob Bayford, then,” said the sick man. “ With a stiff glass of grog at my elbow, and the odds are in my favour that I win the game, giving you pawn and two moves to begin with. I was always clear-headed when the drink was in me.

“ Yes, wine is a charming eye-water.”

Who knew better than racketsy Captain Morris? Fred.”

“ What is it?”

“ Isn't it time for the mixture—the elixir vitæ, *mon fils*.”

“ I think it is.”

“ Time, too, for our friend to take his departure. He makes my head ache a bit,” he answered, a little ungratefully; “ he's such a big fellow to stand between one and the window-light.”

“ I am going now,” said Bayford. “ Let me wish you better health, Alland, and—a better appreciation of your son's labours in your behalf.”

“ I appreciate him vastly,” was the answer;



“all my life I have been prouder of him than he ever dreamed—proud of his preaching and his writings. Many a time, upon my soul, I have kept away from him when the chance was handy, because friends were near, and he would have to own to my beggarly self. Appreciate him? If I were going to die, I could not think more highly of him, sir.”

“Think of his advice a little more.”

“You, who never took advice, are a nice one to palaver,” said old Alland, with a laugh. “There go courting, man, and leave me to myself. Farewell, we meet at Philippi!”

“Farewell.”

“Shall I give *you* advice before I go?”

“If you like.”

“It’s the golden precept by which I have ruled my own exemplary existence,” he said; “it’s worth your consideration—you were always as grave as a judge. This was old Shirley’s maxim—it’s old Alland’s too :

‘Keep your brain as light as you can,  
An ounce of care will kill a man.’”

“Perhaps so.”

Robert Bayford was glad to get out of the sick room. The man's indifference, his callousness even, wearied him. He had travelled to London to see him, to offer him some return for past attention, but he was glad, after the first impulse, that the invalid set no value on the services he might have offered. But then he was restless and feverish, and could find no comfort in rest; he was very anxious to be speeding once more on his journey to Huntingdon, in search of the girl whose heart he should gladden so much by his coming.

The Reverend Frederick Alland went down stairs with him, and stood with him a little while at the door of the house in Lang's Place. To Lang's Place Robert had come with another intention—to confess very simply and plainly that he had feared to trust himself with Amy Saville. But the confession never escaped him; he had not the courage to say so, in those few moments in which they faced each other; he would render the rector uneasy by his confession, which, after all, was uncalled for and unneces-

sary. Why need he or Amy know what a weak fool he had been? The rector was full of exhortation, too, in those parting moments, and spoke to him as James Bayford had spoken, until begged to desist. He took the warning calmly from Alland; said he did not fear his future, or the strength of his resolutions; and went away.

The journey to London had done him good, he thought; he had less morbid thoughts; Cissy Daly's face brightening at the sight of him was before him more frequently than Amy Saville's. He felt that he should be happy with her—that all this wild, unsettled feeling would tame down in time, and leave him matter-of-fact and business-like once more. He took a cab to Euston Square, and, after some lingering about the station, was at last ensconced in a railway carriage, and rattling on to the pleasant Huntingdon county. Old Alland's last refrain—which he had half sung, half croaked in his bed—rang

in his ears all the journey down—the rattle, rattle of the train went on incessantly to the tune—seemed to almost utter the words.

“Keep your brain as light as you can,  
An ounce of care will kill a man.”

He was humming it in the evening to himself as he wound along a wintry road near the pretty village of Elton ; he was beginning to think what a favourable turn events had taken, and how a good action, or rather the thoughts of one, had made him feel more like his old self than he had done for many a long day. He would remember that advice till his dying hour ; he *would* keep his brain free from care by all the means in his power. Latterly he had been much inclined to brood over the irretrievable.

Robert had had no occasion to ask Cissy Daly's address ; long ago he had heard about Cissy's mother, and her cottage at the back of the village—the cottage where her father had died, and from which she had run away in auld

lang syne. The clock of the church was striking seven as he stopped to ask a villager the way.

“To Mrs. Daly’s hoose, do ye say?”

“Yes.”

“I wonder which Mrs. Daly ye mean. The lawyer’s lady, or the oold parson’s lady, whose darter Cissy came back from Loondon soom toime ago noo.”

“The old lady, to be sure.”

“Ah! she be in great trooble—I doan’t think she’ll care to see you just now. The darter, you see!”

“Well—well—what of her?”

“Oh! nothing—ony they booried her to-day in Elton churchyard.”

Robert dashed past the man like a maniac.

He went on to the churchyard—he did not care about Mrs. Daly’s cottage now. There was a late service for some special occasion at Elton Church, and the bells rang out as he approached. Was it mockery of his sorrow, or was he going mad, that the song of

the old dramatist seemed pealing forth  
again :

“Keep your brain as light as you can,  
An ounce of care will kill a man!”

END OF THE SIXTH BOOK. .



BOOK VII.

ACT THE LAST.



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BOOK VII.

ACT THE LAST.



BOOK VII.

ACT THE LAST.



## CHAPTER I.

## THE RETURN.

THREE months after Robert Bayford's fruitless expedition to Huntingdonshire. Spring again—the wild flowers blooming on the Chipnam hills and in the Chipnam valleys, the trees bright and fresh with green young buds and fragrant blossoming. The year had turned over another leaf and begun life anew ; Chipnam never looked a fairer resting-place from the world and the world's troubles.

Robert Bayford entered the old town for the fourth time within our knowledge of him—only on the first occasion, when we introduced him to the reader, has he entered the

place with true lightness of heart. There was no pleasure when he came with a host of London friends, and had rioting and feasting at Saville House—that was his most unhappy era, and he looked back with something like scorn to it. Better to return a poor weak invalid, with scarcely a hope in the world, than to go back to that time; better to return as he had then, cold, hard, and almost sceptical of any good in the world; feeling strong within himself to fight his own battles henceforth, but relying more on himself, and on that strength, than was good for him. After all, but a man of the world, worldly; one who had not met his tribulation in the best of spirits, or passed through the fiery furnace of affliction, to issue forth the purer or the braver for it. Simply, a man who had hardened, but who had learned no lesson—who had resisted his misfortunes and considered them *wrongs*.

The lamp was lighted on the table in James Bayford's parlour, and James Bayford was reading to his wife, when the well-known figure came once more into the room and took his place beside them.

“Back again, you see,” he said on entering.

They rose to welcome him ; Dorcas looking from him to the door for an instant, before she stretched her hand towards him. He noticed the glance, and said a little bitterly :

“Don’t be alarmed I come back the same desolate being that I went.”

“You have reflected,” began his brother ; “you have ——”

“I have been disappointed, James,” the other hastened to add ; “fate, that has been always hard upon me, did not spare me more than usual.”

“Hush, Bob, hush!” said the minister ; “to speak thus of your fate, is but an evasion to mourn at God’s will.”

“I am no minister—I shall never make one,” answered Robert.

There was an arm-chair by the fire — Robert’s favourite seat. He dropped into it somewhat wearily, and stretched both hands towards the flame. James Bayford regarded him intently ; noted for the first time that he was in deep mourning.



“Do you mourn for a friend or a wife, Robert?” he ventured to inquire.

“For a friend I betrayed and helped to kill. For a friend who was dead when I thought of leaving here to marry her. We need say no more concerning her.”

“Very well. Have you travelled far to-day?”

“Yes.”

“Dorcas shall make you a strong cup of tea. There is nothing like it for travellers.”

“Dorcas will take no heed of me, but leave me to rest, or to sleep, in the friendly arm-chair, until I give the signal that I require considerable attention. Pray, go on with your reading.”

“That would not be very courteous, or look like a hearty welcome, Robert,” said Dorcas.

“Are you both glad to see me back again, then?”

“Yes.”

“Knowing that in three more days, a long farewell to all my littleness ensues.”

“A farewell so soon as that, Robert?” said his brother.

“Yes. I shall be tossing about on a sea of uncertainty until I am embarked in business again—until an Eastern sun is scorching me, and the bustle of an Eastern city reconciles me to home.”

“You have made up your mind to India?”

“Yes. And it’s a firm mind that flinches not now. Years hence you will hear how perseverance, or a dogged obstinacy, that turned not to the right or the left, that made no friends, sought no relaxation, desired no distraction from business pursuits, made a rich man of me once more.”

“It’s not a bright picture,” said James Bayford sadly.

“Do we look forward to brightness when the night is coming on, Jemmy?”

“The night you fear may be the dark hour before dawn, Bob.”

“I fear nothing,” said he; “and in the dawn I have no belief.”

There was a long pause. James Bayford and his wife kept their eyes on the tra-

veller; a new change had come to that man, they read it already in the few minutes that had passed.

“I don’t think we need have any forbidden subject between us,” Robert said, after having steadily surveyed the fire some moments, “I have come back prepared to prove to you all what a fossilized being I have become. No more maundering on my side; no more fears for my moral safety on yours.”

He laughed, but it was not a pleasant laugh. What had become of the old ringing tones that had once welled forth from the heart?

“Therefore a plain question and a plain answer. Is Alland married?”

“No.”

“*No!*” exclaimed Robert, in a manner very unlike a fossilized being; “how’s that—what has stopped the marriage?”

“Alland’s father’s death.”

“Ah! I had not thought of that. So the old man drifts away, and the world knows him no more. Did you see him before he died?”

“Many times. I did my best to rouse him to a sense of his position, but I fear my efforts were of little use. To the last hour he clung tenaciously to life—maintaining to the last that he should live many years yet.”

“Poor old fellow—he had outlived all love and man’s respect. What did he want to live on for?”

“Robert!”

“I would have changed places with him had it been in my power. I am weary of the world, Jemmy.”

“No, don’t say that,” James Bayford said, very eagerly; “that is a cruel speech, Robert, and stabs me to the quick. You are a young man, with your best days before you; there is much expected of you yet.”

“Is there?” was the dry answer.

“What troubles you now, years hence you will see was intended by God for your good. You are not coward enough to cry, ‘I give up’?”

“No—no. I will fight my battle with the best of you.”

“You are unhappy; for such unhappiness

as yours, Robert, a cure will come, rely upon it."

"I will leave it to time. You must forgive my doleful airs to-night, considering how tired I am."

"We will not believe that you have come back quite so hard and cold."

"That's right. You two at least will always believe the best of me."

He brightened up, and assumed more of his old manner. After all, it was only assuming; that conviction settled more firmly on the minds of husband and wife. Robert had changed, and again the change was not for the better.

He went early to his room after the cup of strong tea which his brother recommended had been given him, and husband and wife drew closer together to talk of him.

Contrary to his usual habits, Robert did not rise till a late hour on the following morning, baffling, by that movement, a desire of his brother's to have a good look at him by daylight. The good look was only de-

ferred, however, and Dorcas, at least, was not disappointed.

Robert Bayford looked well enough in health—even his good looks had come back with his new strength. But he *had* altered—the face had lost a great deal of its frank expression; and though the eyes met your own, and flinched not—as they had met them in the old times before his troubles began—there was a something cold and repellent in them, which one did not care to encounter more than once.

Robert was in a great hurry to get his breakfast over, and begin his packing for India. Many things had been left at his brother's house, and he did not care to lose a minute in putting them together previous to his final leave-taking.

“I will lose no more time, Dorcas,” he said; “men who have their fortunes to make must understand the value of time. When I was in India before, the only time I lost was courting a girl of sixteen.”

He said it as a jest at the old grievance, but it sounded like a defiance, and Dorcas's

faint smile was but little reward for his bravery in hazarding the subject. He had been anxious to illustrate his own complete indifference to the past; but the first effort was at least a failure, and he knit his brows at his non-success, when he thought Dorcas was not looking at him.

Before he had begun his packing, his sister, who had heard of his return, arrived to study him again. She was the most distrustful of him—still fearful of the strength of his resolutions, and of the honour of the Bayfords, which she dreaded even yet his rashness might imperil. His new demeanour pleased her more than it had her brother or Dorcas.

“He’s looking like a man who means business now,” she said to Dorcas, when he had adjourned to his own room, after promising to spend the evening with Susan and her husband; “I do not think we need fear for him any more, dear.”

“Did you fear too?” asked Dorcas.

“Yes. He looked so troubled, so unset-

tled. Now that his mind is made up to his future, he is a different man."

"I wish he did not look quite so stern," sighed Dorcas.

"That will all wear off, Dorcas; and some day, if we are spared, we shall live to see him the same dear fellow he used to be. I am so sanguine of his happiness now."

Dorcas did not seek to disturb her sister-in-law's serenity by any vague prophesying of her own; but doubts were still at her heart, and Robert's new manner had not impressed her much, so far as his future felicity was concerned. Last night's cry was ringing in her ears yet, as it had rung in her ears then, and sunk to her heart—

"I am weary of the world, Jemmy!"

James Bayford returned to his early dinner a little while after Susan's departure. He had met his sister on the high-road, and they had talked of Robert till Susan's cheerful view of things had sent his own spirits up several degrees. Robert noted his



brother's cheerful mood, and did his best to sustain them until the dinner-cloth was removed, and James was proposing a stroll along the country road.

"I would prefer to keep in-doors, and see as few faces as I can," he said; "for the little while I remain here, Jemmy, you must let me have my own way."

"But you are going to Susan's to-night?"

"She is a Bayford—I will not neglect her. And in the dark night, my face will not scare any one."

Was it satire, or did he wish to convey to his brother that he did not care to meet Frederick Alland or Amy Saville again? His brother disliked bush-beating, and went straight to the point.

"Don't you wish to see any old friends?"

"Not any."

After a slight pause he added:

"It's much the best. I have a great deal to prepare, and can write to Alland and

Amy when I am away. I don't care to see them—I would rather not see them."

"Very well."

"More than that, I will ask a favour of you, James."

"You have only to ask."

"If my presence in Chipnam can be kept a secret in this tattling little town, I would prefer it. I have a horror of a hundred good-byes—good-byes, when they are for ever, are a little trying, Jemmy."

"For ever?"

"Ay, for ever. I shall never cross the seas again, when I once touch Indian ground."

"I—I did not think of that," said James Bayford, very gloomily.

That was an extra shadow to the thought of parting; he had not dreamt of never seeing again this brother whom he had loved so faithfully.

"It won't be like making a decent funeral of me, Jemmy," said he, quick to read his brother's thoughts. "I shall write to you very frequently, and give you all the

news of my career—my moral and political progress, eh?”

“Yes—yes; you must write often,” said James, absently.

“So you will spare me from my friends here—keep my name from their ears; tell Dorcas and Susan, and Susan’s husband, to do the same, if you see them before myself. I have your promise?”

“Yes.”

It was a promise that would be difficult to keep; it was an intention on Robert’s part that must very quickly be foiled. The same evening showed the fallacy of entertaining such a secret in the town of Chipnam; Robert met, at his sister’s house, old Glade and his wife. He did not enjoin them all to secrecy, but he took Susan aside at one portion of the evening and told her that it was his wish to keep to James Bayford’s house, and, if possible, to avoid a meeting with any *more* friends.

Susan thought it was a good plan, and promised to assist him. Susan thought of Amy Saville, and of the danger that always

seemed to leap to the light when Robert crossed her path. Robert went away early, and Susan communicated Robert's wish to the Glades. Mr. Glade senior listened patiently to all the points of argument she chose to lay before him, and then thought the idea was extremely ridiculous, especially for Mr. Bayford, and old Mrs. Glade considered her husband ungrateful and captious, and declined further conversation with him for a week.

Meanwhile Robert walked homewards at a brisk pace, and *met Mr. Alland on his way!*

"Bayford," cried the minister, shaking hands with him, "I thought it could be no other than you, when I saw your stalwart figure looming in the distance."

"I have but just returned. I am going away again to-morrow, or the next day."

"So soon as that?"

The minister looked somewhat curiously at Robert Bayford. The latter was chagrined at the result of his scheming; to

see Alland was to see once more Amy Saville, and experience afterwards the pain of saying farewell to her.

“May I ask, Robert, if you fulfilled that intention with which you left me in Lang’s Place?”

“I was too late,” was the hoarse reply.

“Ah! I beg pardon. I am sorry that I mentioned it.”

By the light of the gas-lamp on the foot-path he noticed the mourning for the first time, and hastened to change the subject. But the change was for the worse.

“You are going home?” inquired Alland.

“Yes. I have many things to prepare before my departure.”

“Let me walk with you as far as your brother’s house.”

Bayford could not refuse. Their past intimacy had been strong, and he respected, nay admired, Alland’s character. But he

was sorry that Alland had forced his company upon him. He knew the one painful subject must inevitably arise between them, and he had at least made up his mind not to see Amy Saville again. He mentioned the father, who had been brought from Lang's Place to Chipnam to die; but Alland passed over the subject with a few sorrowful words, and lo! the change to his affianced bride was made, and Robert, with the lover's arm linked within his own, could but listen.

"You are going away to-morrow, or the next day?" Alland said, repeating Robert's former words; "it is scant notice that Amy and I will be one friend the less."

"I shall feel better away—I am unsettled here, Alland."

"Amy and I will call upon you the first thing in the morning, lest you should escape us altogether. You are Amy's oldest friend, Bayford."

"Give my best wishes for her life-long happiness with you, Alland."

“Give her them yourself, Bayford. You will see her to-morrow.”

“Never again. I ask you to keep my presence here a secret from her. I shall never see her again, sir.”

Alland looked with astonishment into the face of his friend. Robert did not return his gaze, but kept his eyes steadily fixed on the dimly-lighted road in advance of them.

“Never again!—that’s a hard assertion. What has happened, Bayford?”

He had betrayed himself; he had said too much or too little. There was one method of explanation, strange and false, which would account for his demeanour and his desire not to meet Miss Saville. With little consideration he gave it, dreaming not of consequences.

“Candidly, Alland, my meetings with Miss Saville have been painful ones. You, who know my old position with regard to her, should have spared me more than you have.”

“What have I done?”

“You have thrust her in my way, and sought to make us friends—cold and polite friends—and we had been lovers pledged by the most solemn promises to be man and wife. What pleasure did you think I could take in seeing one who had treated me so ill?”

He spoke rapidly and fiercely. He took up the new line of explanation with vehemence, and acted well at least. The Reverend Frederick Alland was more surprised than he had been for years; that view of the question had never presented itself to him; he had not calculated on dislike, perhaps hate, following the old ties which had connected Bayford to Amy.

“I am sorry, Bayford—I am very sorry that in my anxiety to relieve both of you from a position somewhat embarrassing, I was in the dark concerning your feelings towards her.”

“Completely in the dark, Mr. Alland—completely!”

“I thought that you would have become friends again.”



“Mr. Alland, it was impossible.”

“And yet you met her in the churchyard at Chipnam, and implied that the past was all forgotten—asked her then to become your friend, adviser in the future?”

“That was our first meeting, and I was walking in dream-land. I did not anticipate the pain that would follow the renewal of our acquaintance.”

“Still it is strange.”

“Alland, don't let me deceive you too much—don't let me impress you with the belief that I dislike Miss Saville—that my old passion has turned to a hate that is ungenerous and cowardly. I wish her every happiness with you—it will always be the best of news to hear that she is happy; when I am in India I shall look forward to such letters to keep my mind easy on the matter of old friends. But I have suffered a martyrdom in seeing her—my pride has even rankled within me—the memory of our engagement, and how I was thrown aside—how coldly and cruelly—has been ever between her and me

separating us more with every day. There, the murder's out—think me a narrow-minded wretch, if you will, Alland. I deserve your condemnation.”

“Robert Bayford, you are mistaken. Coldly and cruelly your engagement was not broken off—you of all men should be aware of it.”

“I have forgiven the past long ago. Your share in it and hers are part of the old days I have turned my back upon for ever.”

“Surely my share in it was explained to your satisfaction—surely you do not still attribute to me the same unworthy motives with which in the past you taunted me?”

“Pardon me, Alland—no.”

“You judged me wrongfully—you judged Amy still more so. Had you acted in a different manner, your life and mine would have been far different also.”

“I could act no differently.”

“Amy was unsettled—you and she had quarrelled that day—she feared your happi-

ness with her; but Robert—she had not ceased to love you.”

“WHAT?”

“I have hesitated whether to tell you this or not—I thought you might have known it, guessed it from your brother. Your misery was hers, only hers was hidden, and left to prey upon her. When you were gone, she only wakened to the state of her own heart. There, Bayford, is not that a frank confession for me?”

“Who told you this?”

“Amy told me when we became engaged a few months after Mr. Chark’s death.”

“A few months?”

All was strange and new to Robert—engaged since Mr. Chark’s death, and Amy to have broken off an engagement when the heart was really true to him! Surely all this was the dream-land of which he had lately spoken.

“She told you this—this lie?” asked Robert, fiercely.

“Amy Saville herself told me this *truth*. In our confidence, which is perfect, which

conceals nothing, and has no secrets apart—she related to me the whole story of your engagement. She wished me to know and to believe that she loved you very dearly once—that in her impulse and wilfulness she cast that love away, and then woke up to the folly and misery of an act perpetrated without consideration of the consequences. She had begun to fear you, but she had not ceased to hold you in esteem.”

“Ah! *esteem* is the word. It was esteem; and that puzzled me, who sought for a love as deep and passionate as my own.”

“We need not discuss the question, Bayford—it is a painful one to you and me. I have profited by your disappointment; I am happy in that second love which has followed the first, and which will no more swerve from me whilst I am worthy of her, than it really swerved from you when you turned desperate.”

“For what reason am I thus enlightened?”

Alland bit his lips at the insulting query. He had been already too frank, and his frankness had not been fairly appreciated. To soothe the feelings of the man who was going alone to a strange land, who had formed an unfair estimate of his betrothed, and nourished an antipathy that was unjust, he had thrown a light upon a past that had been ever a mystery to Robert.

“I have told you my reason.”

“That I should bear her no dislike—forgive in my heart all the capriciousness which made a ruined man of me?”

“Do you lay your ruin at her door—you, who deliberately sought your own, and would listen to no warning voice? Robert Bayford, I did not think you such a coward.”

He drew his hand from his arm—a sign that their friendship was at an end. He had impugned the fair character of one he valued most in the world, and Alland was her champion, to defend her against all comers.

Robert saw that he was over-acting his part. But Alland's story had sadly confused him ;

there were strange noises in his head, and the dark landscape swam with him a little.

“You have told me a strange story. Who also knows this?”

“Your brother.”

“He, too! And I, who should have known this long ago—who was the one most concerned, and whose life it should have influenced—have been kept in ignorance till this day. Well, well, it is like my friends.”

“You accuse every one but yourself, Bayford!”

Robert looked at Alland in a bewildered manner. Alland’s heart warmed to him again; his surprise and astonishment were still so visibly apparent.

“I should like to hear you confess, before we part, that you believe me. That you have been in the wrong to think so hardly of my affianced wife.”

Robert Bayford gave way—he seized both Alland’s hands, and wrung them in his own.

“I believe you. Forgive my excitement, but I have not had time to consider all

this—to weigh all the new facts against the old fallacies which have misled me. Tell Amy—I shall never see her again in this world—that I have only known the truth till now, and that it will make my heart lighter when the shock is once recovered from. At least it should do so,” he corrected, hastily, “unless the horror of all that I have lost by my own rashness sink me deeper, deeper still! Alland, I don’t bear her any dislike,” he ran on—“I never did. It has been all a lie of mine to deceive you—to deceive myself. I will pray for her happiness as I never prayed for my own; I will become a better man for her sake—midst all my future, deep, dense, and dark as it will be, there shall shine one bright spot to look forward to and love. Ask her to think of me sometimes—not wholly to shut me out, as one unworthy of a thought.”

He dashed away, and left Alland looking after him. Alland was perplexed, scarcely satisfied with the result of his explanations. He had raised a spirit it would be difficult

to exorcise ; he had once again thrust into the foremost place in that man's thoughts, a figure whose presence had unsettled him and made him reckless. He stood there, doubtful if he had acted for the best ; if, after all, it would not have been the better policy to have simply reproved him for his feigned dislike to Amy Saville, and thrown not so strong a light upon her actions in a past Robert was striving to forget. James Bayford had known the truth, and yet lowered not the curtain between it and his brother ; why should he, more officious still, have stepped forward to shatter down a barrier which kept Robert Bayford's thoughts away from her he once loved ?

*Once !* To Frederick Alland's memory came the last words—the last outpouring of the incoherency of Robert ;—and they were words that sounded strangely now, and were not pleasant to remember. He read the whole thoughts of Robert Bayford very clearly that night, though he shut his eyes to the facts conveyed by the reading. He pitied the man's intensity, the long-suffering,



the want of self-command which had leaped forth in his burning words to betray him; but still he felt a little aggrieved, and he was far from satisfied with the result of his night's work.

After all, he would not be sorry when Robert Bayford left for India.

## CHAPTER II.

## STILL STRUGGLING.

ROBERT Bayford went home full of his subject. He scarcely knew whether he was more happy or miserable; whether in the days to come the recollections engendered by the discovery would be pleasant or the reverse. They told him of all that he had lost; but they assured him of Amy's love at the time he cast it aside, and went at so desperate a rate down-hill. He thought that night he should have been a happier man, had he known it long ago; that all who had kept the truth from him had not

acted in the most friendly or the kindest manner.

With this idea, and too excited to deliberate on the propriety of the topic he was anxious to dilate upon, he entered the sitting-room of his brother's house.

"Jemmy," he said half-reproachfully, "you have kept a truth from me that would long ago have lightened my heart."

He dropped into the easy-chair that had been set for him by Dorcas at an early hour, and looked from his brother to his brother's wife. They were surprised at his words, and somewhat at a loss as to their meaning. They could not believe that of his own free will, he would select the subject which he had been ever solicitous to shun.

"What truth!" asked James, bringing his chair closer to his brother's side. Dorcas imitated his example, and the three gathered round the fire to discuss this new matter.

"I met Frederick Alland on my way hither. We talked of the girl I should have married. He told me that I had not been deceived or jilted by her—that it was a

mistake, which my own heedlessness prevented rectifying. That, in fact, she loved me through it all, and you have been aware of it."

"A few days before Mr. Chark's death she confessed as much. Confessed to her own girlish folly, and regretted the evil that her vacillation—or whatever it was—had caused you. We did not meet, I did not discover your abode, till long afterwards. When we met, you were too ill for me to revive the story; when you became strong, your heart turned too readily in the old direction, for any words of mind to help to fan the flame."

"And so you kept me in the dark?"

"When the light would have driven you mad, it was the better plan."

"Alland did not fear the consequences."

"Alland did not know you were still in love with Amy Saville."

"Still!—who says so?" cried Robert.

"That you were drifting on to a folly and wrong, when Dorcas spoke to you on the night before you left us last."

“Right—right!” said Robert; “see what a bad casuist I am. I cannot weigh the advantages and disadvantages so coolly as yourself. I can see now what the story would have made of me a month or two ago, and whither it would have led me, defiant of everything, in my selfishness. I am in the wrong again—I am always wrong!”

He did not care to continue the subject; it already wearied him, or pained him too much. He would be glad to be shut in his own room, with nothing between him and the ocean of thoughts which threatened to sweep him away. Alone with the grim fact that he had made too hasty a step, and taken at her word a girl whose mind had been too disturbed to test the truth at her heart. He had brought it all upon himself by his rashness, by his craven refuge from his care in a world that had taught him nothing but evil.

He took the first opportunity of repairing to his room and turning the key on himself. In his own room, face to face

with the truth that had unnerved him, let us leave him for awhile.

Let us scale the heights whereon poor Chark's villa is pitched, and see if there be anything hidden, anything incomprehensible, in the manner of Amy Saville. That past which has affected Robert Bayford so seriously, may still be exerting its influence over the thoughts of her who had been warned to subdue them. Let us attempt the analysis of one who knew her own mind just too late.

Amy Saville knew her own mind now—knew what an uphill struggle it had been to disguise that mind from all who knew her. She had taken the advice once proffered her by James Bayford; she had kept her promise to the faithful guardian and friend, and was engaged to become Frederick Alland's wife. False advice, following a promise extorted therefrom, and leading her astray—she had only awakened to stern truths since he she had once deceived had crossed her path again. Then the truth

assumed gigantic proportions, and showed her how wrong she was; how much better it would have been to have sought no advice, made no promise, lingered yet a little while upon the bank, and let the fretful current hurry on its way without her.

“There is no amendment that could make him worthy of you,” Robert’s brother had said that day she had laid bare the truth before him, and she had chosen Frederick Alland out of pity! Better to have loved the prodigal and sinner all her life, than to have matched with one whose talents she could admire, whose character she could esteem, whose true piety she had revered, but whose love she did not appreciate or return.

There, that is the secret!—shut up in the skeleton-closet of Amy Saville—the punishment for past uncertainty and present duplicity. She was grateful—truly grateful—for Mr. Alland’s love, but she did not return it—it was beyond her power, despite those efforts

which she made, and which deceived him. Until her heart was wrung by her meeting with Robert Bayford—till she had seen the wreck he was, and felt whose hand had been the foremost to thrust him from the pedestal of his nobleness—she had schooled herself into the belief that love had really taken root in her heart for the rector.

His kindness, gentleness, forethought—the testimony of his deep love for her, had led her to believe it; she was thinking of the happy wife she should be when Robert Bayford came back to Chipnam, and betrayed, to her at least, that she was foremost in his thoughts still. Then the veil dropped, and she was face to face with a truth that appalled her with her own deceit. Then the struggle, known only to herself, began; and was still going on under the mask of her grave, thoughtful womanhood. Then that rigid counsel with herself ensued, which ended in her resolution to go on with the farce—or the tragedy,



or whatever it might prove to be in the end—and let no one in the world from that day know the great secret which was torturing her.

She sank all thoughts of love, all self-accusation of being still deceitful, and took the valid ground of her promise to her father and Alland, of her woman's duty, at any cost or sacrifice, to keep that promise, and not help to mar another life by hesitating at the last. All the romance of her life must wither; and she must take up the sober reality without flinching—draw the veil over the dead hopes, and turn a smiling face to the world, which was curious, and whose curiosity she hoped to baffle. “Which she *would* baffle!” she cried, striking her white hand upon her bosom in the solitude of her own chamber, wherein the last desperate struggle had taken place.

“After all,” she reasoned, “mine will not be a miserable life; I shall make Alland happy, I shall be content with him. He

will be always kind and good to me—he will not expect any great demonstration of affection—loveflowing on for us both will bring peace with it, and the girl's romance may be a folly to smile at some day when Alland's children are calling me mother." She had pledged her word to be his wife; she would try very hard to love him. Better to marry him, she thought, and show by her manner how happy she was all her life, than dash him to the ground with the humiliating thought, that a man infinitely his inferior held still the foremost place in her heart. He was a good and holy man; she would marry him, and love him afterwards as he deserved. Once irrevocably bound to him, there would be little doubt to whom she should turn—it was only a question of time!

Therefore, Amy Saville believed she was glad, when Robert Bayford went away to London again. Believed, we say, because it is very easy to deceive oneself, if the door be studiously shut against self-examina-

tion. Believed she was glad even when Mr. Alland came to Chipnam with his sick father, and told her that Robert, in parting with him in London, had avowed his intention of marrying Miss Daly.

Amy thought Robert was not worthy of her love then—that he had been never worthy of it—and, her pride aroused, the task she had set herself became more easy. Still, it was like a reprieve to know her marriage was postponed after the senior Alland's death; happy as she should be ever afterwards, her heart leaped at the chance of postponing that day which her lover ventured to dwell upon sometimes.

So the marriage *was* postponed till the summer time, and Robert Bayford came once more upon the troubled scene. He had taken the wise resolve of never seeing her again—of proceeding to India without a word of parting between them.

But man proposes. He is the creature of an hour, whose power to regulate the actions of his fellow-men is of no avail

against the greater, wiser power that plans a different course for him, and shows the better way.

## CHAPTER III.

## NO ESCAPE.

THE packing for India was completed—only one day more in Chipnam had Robert Bayford resolved upon. He had subsided into his usual manner—if any manner were usual in a being so thoroughly unsettled. To speak more correctly, he had adopted that manner with which he had lately returned to Chipnam—one that by its hardness had deceived himself, until Alland had endeavoured to enlighten him with regard to Amy Saville's mind. Poor Alland! what a deal he knew of that girl's mind! He who

was a shrewd observer, a judge of character, a man whose far-reaching intellect had attempted to solve every Bible mystery, and to read it after a new method, whose very intentness was alarming to religious peace, knew nothing of the thoughts hidden in a girl's heart, and believed only in the depth of her affection for him!

Robert Bayford was stern, but energetic. That was the new character which was to last him the rest of his life. He had fixed the day for his departure; he had made every arrangement; his whole after-career was planned piece by piece after a fashion that took not into account greater planners than he. Old Glade very humbly had sought him out the day before departure. To the children of the man Glade had wronged, he was always strangely reverential.

"You are going to India, I hear, Mr. Bayford?"

"Yes, Glade."

"You will make your fortune there again—you who know the country well, and

the way to turn therein. When you want a clerk, or an office-keeper and his wife, or a correspondent, will you think of me?"

"Of you?"

"Yes, sir. I shan't die happily without I can be of service to the Bayfords again—without I am sure that they have forgiven me, and can trust me once more."

"It is your money that carries me out to India. Come when you like, Glade."

"Only when you want me—when you think there is work for other hands and heads besides your own. It is a promise, sir?"

"It is."

And a year afterwards that promise was fulfilled, and old Glade and his wife crossed the seas to Hindostan to begin a new life; one as Robert Bayford's clerk, the other as his housekeeper. They left England very proud of being trusted again by a Bayford, and spoke to each other the whole voyage—which is worth recording, considering that Mrs. Glade's fits of taciturnity

were still inclined to suddenly develop themselves.

Josiah Glade had his last argument with his father concerning the propriety of starting for India with his mother at so advanced an age; but mother and father were both of sanguine temperaments, and were not a little elated at the change. Old Glade listened to all his son's reasoning in the accustomed manner, nodded his head and admitted the force of the arguments brought to bear upon his project, but he held fast to the one determination to go, and went away at last rejoicing. Glade and his wife are living still in India—Glade wrote only last week to his daughter Dorcas, and said that he and his wife were never happier, or felt better in their lives; and they sent their love to the little grandchild whom it was doubtful if they should ever see.

This by-way of precipitating matters, and then back to the day before Robert's departure for India—the day which all connected with this story remembered for a life-time afterwards.



The packing, we have said, was completed, and it was Robert Bayford's last day in Chipnam. He intended to remain indoors all that day, to make sure that one face at least should not cross his path, and distract him at the last. He sat down in the afternoon to keep house for Dorcas and James Bayford, who had gone forth on a secret mission into the town—so secret that he guessed well enough that they had departed in search of a present for him—a souvenir by which he should remember them for ever afterwards. As if it were doubtful that he should forget them—his best friends, those who had saved him from his dark estate, and, by their gentleness and forbearance, made him what he was.

He had chosen the arm-chair again, and was sitting with his back to the window, which let in the spring air and sunshine, and brought a scent of flowers to him as he sat there. He was flattering himself that he had learned content at last; that in the hard school of adversity he had conned his lesson, and

that his own iron inflexibility had achieved the victory.

It was a victory that made him sad, however; almost unconsciously to himself, a sigh once or twice quivered throughout that solitary room. He *was* going away for ever, and it was hard to part with them! They thought that they had all the love to themselves, but they could not guess at the bottom of his sternness, irritability, almost girlish incertitude, what a well-spring of deep love there was. His heart had been made to love—to love and cherish all who loved him. Only a little while ago in India he had not a harsh thought against any one in the world—when he touched Eastern soil again, he thought a little bitterly, perhaps all the old lightness of heart would return to him.

All this while, he was unmindful of a dialogue at the door between a lady and the servant. The lady had asked if Mrs. Bayford were in, the girl had said “No,” and, totally forgetful of Robert Bayford and

his reverie, or imagining that he had gone out with the others, had asked her if she would not step in and wait a while until Mrs. Bayford's return.

The lady had come from her house on the Chipnam hills to spend an hour with Dorcas, as she was accustomed to do once or twice a month now; and hearing that Mrs. Bayford would not be a great while absent, had accepted the invitation of the servant-maid.

"I know my way, Mary," she had said, dismissing the girl with a friendly smile, and passing into the parlour, where the fate she had shunned and fought against was lurking that afternoon. Her fate was like his to meet once more, and speak once again of the follies and wrongs which had parted them. She was thinking of him as she entered—thinking of the last night they were there together in that room, she and he, James Bayford and his wife. She was wondering if he were in England—if he had married that woman—when she was within arm's length of him.

She uttered a faint shriek as some one leaped from the chair in his excitement; she gave a terrified look towards him, and then towards the door, which had closed upon her, leaving those two together once again.

“Miss—Miss Saville!”

“Mr. Bayford,” she murmured, “I—I did not know that you were in Chipnam.”

“Yes, I am in Chipnam. I am here to bid good-bye to a brother and sister whose love I have repaid by much ingratitude — who I think must love me all the more for the trouble I have caused them.”

“Have you seen Mr. Alland?—he did not tell me that you were here.”

“I begged him not.”

“Indeed!”

“I begged him not, for I had not the courage to face you again. I have been hiding here like a coward away from you.”

“Sir!”

Amy drew herself up very proudly,

and met his flashing eyes with hers—cold and repellent, and betraying nothing of the excitement at her heart.

“Forgive me, Miss Saville—it is the truth. Bear with me and it for the few minutes which this interview will last. Between you and me there will be ever after that, the silence of the grave.”

“Pray say no more, Mr. Bayford,” urged Amy.

“I am going to India to-morrow—I never intend to return. Miss Saville, I have been afraid to meet you until now. I trust, by the memory of the past, dear once to both of us, that you will bear with me for a little while.”

Amy Saville sank into a chair, keeping her eyes directed at the old lover, with a timidity she tried in vain to conceal. His earnestness affected her; held her spell-bound by the old tie which he had mentioned.

“You will remember my position—to whom I am affianced?”

“You may trust me, Miss Saville.”

He who could not trust himself, who had no command over the impulse which leaped to his lips, said that and believed in it.

“I should have come up to the old house amongst the Chipnam hills to-night, and taken a silent farewell of it—and you,” he said in a low tone; “but I felt that I had not the courage to face you with a formal good-bye. Do not misunderstand me, Miss Saville; I had not the courage to face you, because I had grown a nervous and irritable man, and you were of the past my thoughts would cling to.”

Amy did not reply. She had no words ready to her lip, and the lip was quivering, despite her efforts to maintain her calmness.

“I am glad you are here—I am glad that I have seen you once more. I can say that the more boldly, knowing the tie which binds you to another, who has won

your love, and will make you his wife. Yesterday he and I met on the high-road and spoke of you."

"Of me?"

"He was anxious that I should see you now—he who, in his purity of soul, guesses so little the evil in one's heart; and I was anxious to avoid a meeting! He told me more of our past than I had ever dreamed till then, and I ask your pardon now for thinking ill of you. He spoke of our first, our last quarrel, when the long engagement was ended, and we drifted our separate ways; he told me that I had misjudged you on that day, and that, in my hastiness and wrong, I flung aside a prize which should have been mine all my life. Miss Saville, if that be true, I ask you to forgive my madness."

"There is nothing to forgive on your side."

"On whose, then?"

She did not answer.

"I am going away," he said, standing

before her with his outstretched hands; "we shall never meet again. Be the faithful friend, the comforter to me, and speak as to a brother, or to some valued friend of mine, whom you could trust. I will not abuse your confidence."

"Give me a moment to consider."

She was agitated—strangely agitated. The man with the mask off was the man she had loved—whom she was loving still—whose every word assured her of the old passion still flickering forth in the face of all opposition and moral resistance. Still they were never to see each other again—a few more minutes, and they would be irrevocably parted. Before that period let her ask him for his forgiveness. He was a ruined man, and her hand had first pulled down the goodly edifice. She would give worlds to hear him say that he forgave her with all his heart—that the sins he had laid to her door he would mercifully remove. The burden had been hard to sustain, and she was a weak woman!

"Mr. Bayford," she said at last, in so low



a tone that he had to stoop his head somewhat to catch her words, "it is for me to ask forgiveness."

"No—no!"

"Pray let me speak," she implored; "I must not stay here—I must not listen to you too long. Mr. Alland spoke the truth, sir,—I dare avow it, as well as he,—but to the truth I only awoke when you had left me. I had been struggling in a sea of uncertainty concerning my love; whether it were worthy of your deep affection—whether it would not interfere with a morbid idea of what was considered by me religious in those days, and which idea you scoffed at. But I loved you then despite my ignorance, and when we parted I knew it by my utter desolation. Forgive me the girl's uncertainty and wilfulness, and all the evil which I brought to you, and all the fair prospect which I marred. I shall be happier believing that you bear no malice in your heart against me."

Her voice faltered more and more. She hung her head still lower, and the tears

came welling forth slowly, then more quickly.

“Malice in my heart! God knows that it is full of ——”

He paused and wrung his hands together, and walked silently to the window, at which he stood, with those clasped hands behind him, looking out into the garden.

“I have prayed for courage to tell you this some day—to ask your forgiveness some day. I thought it might occur when I was Mr. Alland’s wife, perhaps—never like this, at such a time, and under such wild circumstances! Am I forgiven?”

“God bless you—God bless you!” he murmured, without turning his head or moving from his post; “you are well quit of me, Miss Saville. I was never worthy of you—I should have made you a bad husband, and cast a blight upon your life. I am a villain!”

There was a long pause, and then a voice more feeble still at the open door of the room.

“I am going now, Mr. Bayford.”

“Good-bye.”

Before she could respond, he had turned and crossed the room hastily to her side.

“Let us shake hands and part the best of friends.”

He held both his hands towards her, and she placed hers within them, murmuring still, “I may trust you,” as if for her protection—by way of charm against the temptation to rebel against her own hard fate—the temptation which she felt was there!

“You may trust me,” he said hoarsely.

But his hands tightened their clasp, and in another moment he had drawn her into his arms and kissed her wildly, passionately.

“Forgive me,” he murmured, “it is the last time!”

She struggled from him and shrank against the wall, her face deathly white, and her eyes preternaturally large. There was more of horror than of love in her looks before the features softened and she gave way to a passionate outburst of tears—dropping back into the chair from

which she had risen, and spreading her trembling hands before her face.

Robert Bayford stood glaring towards her, as she rocked herself to and fro, and shook his heart with her heavy convulsive sobs. Then all composure vanished, all effort was tossed angrily down the gulf where so many good hopes and efforts had gone before, and he was bending over her and trying to draw her hands down from her face.

“Amy, tell me to stop! Tell me that you love me now better than Alland—that my claim to be your husband, hold you to my breast, is greater than his, and asserts its just pre-eminence. I have a right to love you—you were pledged to me years before he stepped between us and stole my prize away—I held you in my arms, a little child—I am your oldest, dearest friend, whose only misery is parting irrevocably from you. Ask me to stop!”

“I am pledged to be *his* wife—I will do my duty,” said she, struggling to her feet again. “Let go my hands, sir; you have no right to hold me thus!”

“Ask me to go, then! Tell me with your own lips that beyond is despair, the wiles of the devil,—the old temptations into which one must plunge, or go mad with the horror of utter loneliness. Ask me to descend to the seventh estate, which is worse than the first, and be still more unworthy of your thoughts.”

“I ask you to go, with faith in yourself and in God,” she cried, when her hands were free and she had gained the door again; “thinking of me, if you will, as one who is praying, hoping for your better life. Go, Robert, but not despairing of the future, which is in your own hands, which will be, years hence, so much brighter than you dream. Don’t talk of new temptations, and the old downhill road, because I cannot love you, or break the heart of an honest, upright man. Because I cannot act the traitress to my word—to him.”

“Amy, you do not love him—I swear it!”

“You are cruel,” she murmured, still lingering on the threshold of the temptation

which had nearly mastered her, still struggling with her tears and sobs, and feeling too weak to drag her way down the passage to the door, and the cool garden, where sober thought would rouse her from entrancement.

“I am thinking of you and *your* future now,” he raved; “you will go to the altar with a lie on your lips, and expect God’s blessing on your marriage. I see it all—the mists have fallen from my eyes—I know the story to the end!”

She gathered strength to defy him. His last charge brought her to her feet, and the flush of pride to her face.

“I have asked you to go, and you will not leave me. I have begged you to be merciful, and there is no mercy to me or honour in yourself that holds me here. You have forgotten your self-respect—you have no consideration for mine. Let me go!”

She spoke as if he were holding her hands still—she was only murmuring against the spell of his burning words, his cruel

reproaches, which in that last moment he would not spare her.

Robert's senses came back. All the folly he had been guilty of stared him in the face and brought the red brand thereon.

"Forgive me," he said, "I am a madman, without a sober or a just thought. Leave me to the bitterness of remorse, which will accuse me more than you. Not a stinging word from your lips, to be the last that will echo for ever in my heart!"

He flung himself upon his knees before the chair she had sprung from, and hid his face away from her. After all, was he anything but a child, with a child's will to restrain him from good? When he had seemed most firm and hard, he had been ever trembling on the brink.

He felt her light hand resting on his shoulder the moment afterwards. He shivered, but he did not look up. He was praying that she might whisper one word—only one—to give him comfort in the pilgrimage he was about to commence.

"*Courage!*" she whispered, and then stole

out of the room, closed the door upon him, and—could go no further. Shut from him, and yet divided but by that frail panelling between her and *him she loved*—only the turn of the handle to betray her still more, and show how weak and unavailing were her efforts to escape him; only to think just a little of the holy man believing at that moment in the depth and intensity of her devotion for him! Something held her a prisoner on that sheep-skin mat—drew the hot tears surging from her, made her once more the weak woman trembling on the verge of the Error.

And whilst thus struggling, James Bayford and his wife stood before her, in what way or manner she knew not. She heard them say “Miss Saville,”—and look from one to the other, and then to her agitated face; she tried to pass them by keeping to the wall, and clinging to its surface for support.

“Let me go home,” she wailed forth;  
“oh! let me go home!”

“See to her, Dorcas,” cried James Bay-



ford; "there has been wrong done to our name—I must learn the truth of this."

He left Amy Saville clinging to his wife's arm, and strode into the room. He went as if by intuition to the brother, whose despairing attitude he did not look alarmed at—he almost roughly seized him by the shoulder.

"Robert, what does this new madness mean?"

## CHAPTER IV

## ALLAND GIVES CHASE.

NEED we dwell upon the interview between the brothers—between that of Dorcas Bayford and Amy Saville. Surely this old love-story—this story of an impulsive woman whose judgment was less in the right place than her heart; of an impulsive man, whose strength to endure lasted but till the temptation beset him—needs no tedious recapitulation.

You and I, dear readers, who fall in love in the most fashionable manner, and are always so strong at the right time, and

are not like unto other sweethearts, husbands, wives, but regulate our course of life with a propriety common to well-balanced minds, can afford to pity this couple, though we even be a little critical in our commiseration. "It was all Amy Saville's fault," or "It was all Robert Bayford's fault," and she or he should have known better, and have been less hasty, and so forth. The professional novel-reader, who lets nothing escape him, will shrug his shoulders, unmoved by our sentiment. He is a man of the world of novels—what an odd world it is!—and will say, "Oh! it's all right now. There are but three more chapters to the book, and the manager is clearing the stage for the grand tableau, and the 'happy-ever-afterwards' scene, with which such stories as this invariably conclude." And the proper way of closing them, too, perhaps, and sending our fair readers contented to bed. If we leave a nice impression behind us of love, and roses, and orange-blossoms, and a grand halo of general forgiveness, will they not hold us in grateful

remembrance, and ask after our next novel, if such a creation *should* happen to appear?

The interview between the brothers Bayford we need not particularize. Their characters we hope are pretty well understood—we can guess what was charged by the one, first resented, then confessed by the other. James Bayford imagined all that had been but cursorily alluded to—Amy's excitement, weakness, tears; the betrayal, to the man she loved, of the secret she once had avowed.

And Amy and Mrs. Bayford? The one whose love had known many storms, and seen many tortuous windings of its current through the brushwood and thicket of misconception and mistrust; and the other, whose course of true love had run smoothly to the end. Amy confessed all, pillowing her face on the bosom of the young wife; and Dorcas listened, and shed a few tears with her, just for company's sake!

Then all four very stolidly looked ahead of them, and wondered how it would end, little thinking that the end was coming

to seek them out, and would not wait their scheming.

The end was coming in the person of Mr. Alland, the aggrieved man, the man of honour,—better still, the man to whom religion would be ever a comfort from the world's disappointment. Mr. Alland had been thinking of Robert Bayford that day; he knew it was his last day in Chipnam, and that, in the common course of events, he and Bayford would never meet again.

Robert Bayford, in their last meeting, had implied a farewell; thought, doubtless, that the parting was over, and he had said enough to keep the rector away from him. The rector had thought so also at first, until he had reflected further upon the subject. Then he arrived at the conclusion that it had not been a friendly parting; that at one period they had almost verged on a quarrel, and that Robert Bayford was going away perhaps with a very bad impression of him. And for Robert Bayford he had always experienced a liking—only a little while ago, and they had been friends.

Robert was a man for whom any one might feel an affection; moreover, he was a man who had had more than his fair share of trouble, and perhaps, after all, he, Alland, was not wholly free from blame concerning it. More than once he had tried hard to separate the line between his love and his esteem for Amy Saville; to define the exact period when he found her flitting before his thoughts too often, and troubling even his Bible studies. Was it before Robert Bayford came back from India, when Amy was suffering from parson-worship, or was it afterwards, when he knew Amy was free? He thought it was afterwards; he had persuaded himself that it was surely afterwards!

He had tried hard for Robert's friendship, and finally succeeded in obtaining it. And it had not been a friendly parting between them in those last moments together. Robert had spoken of Amy in terms which required a rebuke for his severity, and then again in terms that implied he was loving her still in the face of the engagement, de-

spite Alland's love. Poor fellow, he must feel horribly desolate; he would go down to James Bayford's house and bid him good-bye again. Perhaps he might say a few words to the purpose, which Bayford might bear in remembrance when he had time for sober thought. Alland was not generous by halves. He thought of Amy Saville, who was to know nothing of Robert's stay in Chipnam, whom Robert had owned he had not the courage to face. He thought of her when he was half way to the dissenter's cottage, and fancied that Robert would forgive him if he told Amy that he was in Chipnam and brought a message from her conveying a sense of her sorrow at his going away. He felt assured that Robert loved Amy, that it was not well for him to see her; but he mentally changed places with this prostrate rival, and thought that it would be a comfort to receive some greeting from one whom Robert had not the heart to face.

He turned and made the cut through the lane by St. Edward's Church, and went on

towards the villa on the hills. Had he proceeded direct, he would have encountered Amy at James Bayford's door, stopped the meeting, and altered, either for better or worse, the sequel of this history. But he went on to the villa, wondering what Amy would say to him, whether the news would surprise her and make her face flush; what message she would send to Robert Bayford? News, especially news of Robert Bayford, did unnerve Amy when offered suddenly. He remembered only a little while ago telling her of Robert's departure to Huntingdon, and of the object which he had in view, and being startled by the red blood mounting to her cheeks. He had felt an ugly twinge at the time, and a secret wish that he had not told her; but he was a man who did not treasure unpleasant reminiscences, and so had forgotten the incident till then.

He reached the villa and was informed by the servant that Miss Saville had gone to spend the afternoon with Mrs. Bayford. Then the whole fear swooped down upon



him; he saw what might happen, what Robert Bayford might say, how Amy—*his* Amy—might be pained by his vehemence, and he turned and hurried down the hill again.

There was danger ahead—he felt there was danger—and he hastened on. He thought of the perfect confidence between him and his betrothed—more than once he had boasted of *that!*—but it did not inspire him with any great degree of comfort at that time. He thought only of the strangeness of the impulse which had lured Amy on that particular day to proceed to James Bayford's cottage.

Before that cottage at last, and trying to smile at his own nervousness—at the shaking hand which had been upraised to the knocker, before the door was suddenly and fiercely opened to him. James Bayford had seen him advancing up the garden path, and hastened to admit him. Alland looked with dismay at the white face which stood in his way.

“Come in, Alland. You guess what has happened?”

“ They have met?”

“ Yes.”

“ He has not dared—he has not dared—” began Alland, when James Bayford interrupted him.

“ What he has dared to do, and what, for his sake and yours, I dare to say, you will know directly. Come with me.”

He went into the room where Robert’s interview with Amy Saville had taken place—where Robert was still crouching before the chair, with his face hidden in his arms. Mr. Alland followed him.

“ Robert, here is Mr. Alland; will you speak to him, or shall I?”

“ I can’t face him,” muttered Robert.

Mr. Alland, holding his breath with suspense, turned his eager face towards the younger brother.

“ Will you explain? I don’t see my way clearly yet.”

Yet he saw all clearly from that moment; all that James Bayford was to disclose had been photographed upon his brain—there was no mystery remaining unto him. From

the vantage ground of his perceptions he saw his bitter isolation, and knew all that had been hewn away from him since he had met Amy Saville last.

Seeing and knowing this, and suffering much, he still held firm, and waited for his friend to speak.

## CHAPTER V.

## KEEPING FIRM.

JAMES BAYFORD'S task of explanation was not a pleasant one to carry out. It was not eminently satisfactory to acknowledge the weakness of Robert Bayford, or to speak of the foolish mistake he himself had committed in giving the best advice to her whom Robert Bayford loved.

Since the chapter wherein we left Robert with James, and Amy with Dorcas, James Bayford had seen his wife for a moment, and asked one question, which, answered by a word, had decided the course he was then about to adopt.

“By an accident, or rather, for an all-wise purpose, Miss Saville and my brother have met again,” began James Bayford; “such a meeting, close upon a parting for ever, coming by surprise, too, unnerved them both, and brought about a strange result. My poor brother here spoke of a subject which you had first mooted two days since; it had disturbed him, and he could not restrain the torrent of words that leaped forth to betray him.”

“And me?”

“And you, Mr. Alland,” said James Bayford, sadly; “granted. It was a betrayal that only his agony of mind can excuse—I offer it to you, and beg you will not judge him too severely.”

“I judge no man—go on.”

“He spoke of his love for her; he uttered words of passion I cannot excuse; he forgot everything save that Amy Saville was before him—going away from him for ever. He had feared to see her, knowing his want of self-command, and she had come of her own free will before him—innocently, and

unknowing of his presence here—to strike the barriers down that had checked so long the outpouring of his troubled heart.”

“And Amy—and Amy?” Alland asked, with feverish impatience.

“Struggled to close her ears and fly from him. Struggled with herself and all the old memories by which he conjured her to listen, to forgive him. She had fled and gained the victory when I arrived—but the triumph had sapped at her strength, and, in the very weakness which succeeded, the whole truth escaped her.”

“That she loves that man—and that, during the whole term of her engagement to me, she has been living with a lie at her heart, deceiving and ensnaring!”

“She has been deceiving and ensnaring herself, Mr. Alland,” said James Bayford; “deceiving herself with the hope that she should love you in time, and ensnaring her mind with the belief that her duty lay in keeping her word to you.”

“Well—well—I will believe it.”

He sat down and passed his white hands

over his forehead, pressing them for a moment to his temples, as though to steady the brain that rocked a little with the shock. He felt he was not going to give way—that his strength was that of a lion to resist such a blow to his love and his pride. He was a proud man, who would have died and made little sign of the deadly stab which had been given him. Those who watched him, who perhaps pitied him, should but guess at his agony when he drew the cloak of his pride gracefully over his wound, and looked the world in the face to the last!

“Mr. Alland,” said James Bayford, “I ask you to forgive *me*. I ask you to hear the story of the ill-advice I offered that poor girl—the advice which, acting upon, led to the unhappy engagement between you and Miss Saville.”

“I am listening.”

“When she was troubled, Miss Saville came to me and told her story—confessing that she loved my brother still. At that time Mr. Chark was dying, unsettled in mind

about the future of his ward, and solicitous that she should accept the offer of your hand. She told me the plain truth, and I advised her for the worst. I thought her love was a morbid weakness that would outgrow itself, or turn to one more deserving of her than my brother. I assured her that with you she would find happiness, and that her wisest and best course in life was to become your wife. Forgive me, Alland, that advice which has led to so much misery—I take my share of blame for all that has happened here to-day.”

“No, no—there is no blame attached to any one but me,” cried Robert Bayford, springing to his feet and beginning to pace the room impatiently; “I have strewn fresh ashes in a path that was already barren enough; I have studied but my own selfish, cruel ends. Mr. Alland,” pausing before him, “I don’t ask you to forgive me—I am unworthy of any honest man’s good words. I ask you but to let me go away to-morrow, without your curse upon my head for all the misery I have caused.”



“And Amy Saville?” asked the rector, almost fiercely; “will you go away and leave her to her misery alone? In the future, concerning which you have so often raved to me, what thoughts of that poor girl remain to trouble you?”

“I had thought—I, I had hoped—that you would become her husband still. Her word is pledged to be your wife, sir.”

“Sir,” with a lip that curled almost with scorn, “you dont know me.”

“But you ——”

“The woman who loves not with her whole heart and soul will be never Frederick Alland’s wife,” he said proudly; “it is your place to think what will become of her—what is the step fitting for her and you. I resign her, Mr. Bayford—all my hopes of happiness with her I resign too, looking to my God for the comfort He will not refuse me.”

He turned to James Bayford, and suddenly held forth his hand.

“I forgive that bad advice—you meant it for the best, and you thought

more highly of me than I deserved. Where is Miss Saville? I must see her."

"Pardon me, but is it necessary just now?"

"I am doing nothing hastily, Mr. Bayford. Were I to wait fifty years I could not more calmly and deliberately set about the duty which lies before me to fulfil. Is there but one way, sir?"

"I think not."

"Let me see Miss Saville, then, and close the chapter. Is she with your wife?"

"Yes."

"Lead the way, sir. I have very little to say, and your wife need not leave that poor girl whilst I say it. Mr. Bayford," looking back at Robert, "will you wait here till I return?"

"If you wish it," was the reply.

Mr. Alland shut him in, and then followed James Bayford across the passage to the door of the opposite room. For a moment he passed his hands across

his high white forehead and pressed his temples between them again, as the dissenter turned the handle of the door.

James paused and looked back at him.

“Are you not precipitate, Alland? Have you sufficiently considered?”

“Yes, sir—yes. There is little to do now—and we can fight on well to the end.”

Bayford flung the door open.

“Mr. Alland!”

## CHAPTER VI.

## FIRM TO THE LAST.

A FIGURE that had been sitting by Mrs. Bayford's side on the couch near the window, rose at the announcement, and sought to throw itself at Mr. Alland's feet. The rector checked the impulse, caught Amy by the wrists and led her back to the couch, taking his seat beside her.

“Oh! forgive me, Mr. Alland—forgive me! I have been very wrong. All my life I have gone wilfully and yet blindly a false way.”

“God has brought the light upon the

darkened road in time," he said; "freely, my poor girl, take that forgiveness which you ask of me."

"You are ever good and kind," she murmured.

She kept her face averted from him; she dared not look him in the face—the very generosity of his forgiveness was difficult to stand against, and she was anxious to keep strong and not give way again.

"I have only one reproach to make, Amy," he said, resting his hand gently on her own; "why not have told me the whole truth long ago? When I asked you to be my wife a second time, or when Robert Bayford came back, and your heart told you that you had not forgotten him? Surely my whole life and character have not appeared to you so feeble, that you could not have told me all, and feared not the result!"

"I was trying hard to love you, sir—to believe that my best chance of happiness was in promoting yours."

“You would never have believed it all your life; and you might at any moment, when it was too late, have let the truth escape and caused irreparable harm. There, don't cry,” he said, rising, “I do not complain. At the eleventh hour, both you and I see what is best. You will find your real happiness as Robert Bayford's wife; and I shall discover in time the right path which leads to peace of mind—perhaps the right woman to love and honour me, who knows?”

He spoke it with a cheerful air, but it deceived no one. The two women and the man who were listening to his words felt their hearts thrilling at them. There was firmness and true dignity in his farewell of her.

“You will go to India as Robert Bayford's wife,” he said; “let me, before I go—if I should not see you again—wish you every happiness with him. Let me add, that I think you will be happy—that with his mind untroubled, and with the blessing of a gentle, loving wife upon him, he will be

the same man whom you first learned to love, before my shadow fell across his path."

"Oh! sir, I am not thinking of being his wife—I—I—"

"It will occur in time; it is the fitting end to his troubles and yours. You both love each other very dearly—*there is no one standing in the way*—the dawn breaks without a cloud in the golden sky above us all. So with my blessing—if it be worth anything—on your future life, let me go away, Amy. Health, and happiness, and God's peace be with you, girl!"

"But you, sir—but you?"

"Do you fear for me, Amy?"

She looked at the resolute face for the first time. This would be no second story of a good man's fall, because a share of the world's tribulation had met him in the full career of his complacency.

"No, sir, I do *not* fear."

"I shall travel, perhaps, for a few weeks. I have been anxious many years to visit Syria and the holy places I have spoken about so much; I confess to a disappoint-

ment that change will cure me of. Presently, Bayford," turning to him, "I shall be again in Chipnam, working with you for the benefit of those who may need our help in the days ahead of us."

"Wherein we shall be friends still—say that, Alland?"

"Better friends than ever—why not?"

He looked at Amy wistfully—suddenly stooped down and kissed her on the forehead.

"Good-bye."

She murmured something in response; but he was gone before her voice had reached him. Gone from the room, across the landing, to the room wherein waited Robert Bayford.

"Bayford," he said, advancing, "when I first saw you this afternoon, I thought I could never forgive you, or think well of you again. But, in your place, with your great life-long sorrow, I cannot say whether I should not, in some way or other, have given way like yourself."



“ I am not deserving an excuse, sir.”

“ Will you take my hand ?”

“ God bless you !”

The two men’s hands met; he who had won the game feeling nervous and ashamed beneath the generosity of him who had lost it.

“ How do you bear a disappointment like this—how *can* you, sir ?” he murmured.

“ I look beyond to my faith, which no earthly disappointment can strike away from me—which will quickly teach me resignation for a loss such as this. Bayford, it was that want of faith which led you to the brink of ruin—which may shipwreck you again, if you do not think of your God.”

“ I will think, sir !”

“ I need not ask you to take care of Amy—to love and cherish, and be gentle with her. You will do that ?”

He turned away, and met James Bayford again.

“Good-bye,” he repeated, rather wearily.

Bayford opened the door for him ; and then crossed the lawn to the garden-gate, which he also opened for Alland.

“We *shall* work together for good still, Mr. Alland?”

“In the good time—God willing!”

They parted, and that very night the rector of Chipnam left for London, *en route* for the Holy Land, concerning which he had once lectured unsuccessfully. In two month's time he was back again at his post, not much browned by a foreign sun, looking rather pale for a traveller in the East, people said. After his return he was more gentle, and less critical in his pulpit than he had even been since Mr. Chark's death. And out of the pulpit he was always loved.

He and James Bayford worked together for good—church and chapel keeping steadily abreast of each other, full of the teaching of the great truths in which all Christian sects believe.

Worked together for good, and for life. When children were nestling round the knees of the Glades and the Bayfords; when Amy was in India, with children of her own, and Robert was a rich man—better still, a happy one.

Worked together for good! For the good which you and I have the power to do if our hearts are in the work, and we cast aside the trammels of sectarianism, as Bayford and Alland did. For there is no sect in the heaven we talk about; it is broad and open to all, as our creed should be, whatever it is, and to whomsoever we preach. There is one sermon worth the hearing, and that will bear eternal preaching upon—the love that God bears his erring children, and the mercy that he is ready to extend to them. There are different ways of telling those truths, of seeking that mercy denied not to Jew or to Gentile, but the best way is that which thinks most of the mercy, and very little of the *form* by which that mercy is sought.

An honest prayer from the earth to the

heaven, for the help which the earthling  
may need—and who is bold enough to lay  
his hand upon the Book of Life and say,

“It is not according the Law. It is  
not written here!”

THE END.



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